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[PRICE ONE PENNY]



["I WAS DISMISSED YESTERDAY!" MARY SAID, SADLY—"ACCUSED OF EVERY SHAMEFUL THING, INCLUDING THEFT!"]

WOMAN AGAINST WOMAN.

CHAPTER III.

The delicate colouring and exquisite softness of an English summer twilight can give a touch of beauty and a sense of the picturesque to the most prosaic and dull surroundings. The slowly creeping darkness can shroud many a blemish; the red glow in the sky, left by the sunken sun, the grey warm veil of gloaming mingling with the ruddy gold and pale yellow sky streaks can decorate even an ordinary London street of small, ugly houses with a reflection of its own glory.

So it was with a certain quiet street—one of the many that run criss-cross about the neighbourhood of Oxford Circus, on a certain lovely August night.

Everybody seemed out-of-doors on this evening.

The heat had been tremendous throughout the day in the ever-throbbing, ever-tumultuous city, but now, with work done and the heat

diminished, the tired population sought the refreshment of the air in sauntering leisurely to and fro in the streets.

There was nothing in this particular row of houses to distinguish it from a thousand such in the metropolis; the same dingy look, the same smoke-tinted curtains and faded hanging, the same air of gentility, and the same square card above nearly every doorway announcing that apartments could be obtained within.

It was ordinary dull and ugly, and yet to the eyes of a woman who entered the street it represented the only place in the world where a welcome of sincerest love and sympathy could be found.

She walked slowly along the pavement until she reached a house nearly at the end of it. There she paused a moment, then mounted the steps, and knocked at the door.

"It will be like a gleam of sunshine in winter to feel Esther fling her arms about me!" she said to herself, and there was a thrill of pleasure in her heart for the moment.

The door was opened by a little child of the

usual London type, who stared open-mouthed at the newcomer.

"Don't you know me, Patty?" the woman said, and her voice was marvellously sweet and clear.

Before the child could answer a girl's voice came from the narrow staircase in a little scream of delight.

"Mary!" it said, speaking volumes in the word. Then there was a scamper of feet, and two arms were flung round the woman. "Darling, darling! how glad I am! How you have surprised me! Come in, come in! Patty, run and tell mother Miss Mary has come! We must have tea, or supper, or something. Oh! I feel as if I were in a dream."

Throughout this speech, and much more of the same sort, Mary was drawn up the narrow staircase by her two hands, led into a front room, and planted on a sofa.

"Now, don't talk a word," the owner of the room said, imperatively. "Just sit still while I take off this hot cloak and this thick veil. I long to see your beautiful face again!"

"Dear Esther!" the other said in her sweet

voice, a little tremulous now. "Always staunch and true! always good! always loving!"

The travelling coat was off now, and flung on a chair, the veil removed, and Esther soon made the close bonnet follow suit.

There was a lamp lit on a shelf near; above a tablet of papers, pencils, crayons, and all the paraphernalia of an artistic person. And by this light the beauty of the new comer was fully revealed—the small, oval face, the dark hair, so dark as almost to be black, the ivory complexion, and the eyes—deep, rare, real blue eyes, shining from between the dark lashes like liquid sapphires. It was an extraordinarily beautiful face, not only because of its physical perfections, but because of the mind, the spirit that shone through the eyes, "windows of the soul," and lived about the firm, set mouth. The bonnet and veil had added a year or two of age to the face; but, seen without them, Mary Temple looked what she was—a very young woman, not more than twenty-two at the very outside.

In figure she was as slender and youthful as the girl beside her, but there was an air of grace and dignity about her that Esther Gall could never claim to, slender and young as she was.

"Now," Esther said, as she drew a big chair to the open window, and put Mary into it, "now," falling on her knees beside the chair, "now, darling, let me hear you speak, so that I may realise this is, indeed, no dream, but you yourself, actually *you*!"

"I am quite real!" Mary answered, with a low laugh, "though," with another tremble in her voice, "I expect you took me for a ghost when I walked in so suddenly, Esther, and yet you should be accustomed to my ghostlike appearances now, dear. How many times have I returned to you, my only friend, like the proverbial bad penny?"

Esther put her hand over the bitter, beautiful lips.

"Hush, hush!" she said, tenderly. "Don't you know you give me the greatest happiness in the world when you call me your only friend, and come to me in your sorrow. Mary dear, you are never anything but a sunbeam, come when you will!"

Mary bent forward and kissed the plain, earnest face.

"Throw your bread upon the waters," she said, gently. "Of a surety, Esther, the little breed of sympathy I threw for you years ago has come back to me threefold."

"You were my good angel then, as you are now," Esther said, in a low voice full of emotion; then she rose and rang the bell. "You must have something to eat, you are tired out, I am sure. Fancy travelling from Brussels in this heat; it must have been a furnace on board the boat. I suppose you walked from Charing Cross here?"

Mary was silent a moment.

"You got a letter from me yesterday, Esther?" she said at last.

"Yes, darling; here it is!"

Mary Temple looked out of the window.

"I—I tried to warn you in it that I might not be able to stay very long, Esther, but—"

"I think I understood it, darling!" Esther said. "I seem to know your every thought when you write. What was the trouble this time, my dear one?"

"The old story, and yet a new one. A dependent position means to me, at least, an infinite variety of insult."

She rose and moved to and fro slowly.

"Madame de Noitier disliked me from the first, Esther. I saw it immediately, but I hoped to overcome it. She is a plain woman, insanely jealous. He—"

Mary paused a moment, then made a gesture with her small hand.

"You can imagine the sort of man who haunted my footsteps, dogged me in every way, and brought upon me the full violence of his wife's anger. I was dismissed yesterday, ignominiously accused of every shameful thing, including a theft of a ring she had lost

a few days ago. My clothes are detained," Mary went on, mechanically, scarcely heeding Esther's exclamation of horror and indignation. "My salary unpaid, my reputation torn in two, as it were, and flung in my face. I hold myself lucky," she finished, with a little bitter laugh, "that I was permitted to leave for England. Doubtless, if she could have substantiated her accusation of theft with any sort of proof I should have been handed over to the care of the Belgian police by this time!"

"Mary, darling, don't!" Esther said, pleadingly. Then with sudden anger, "Such a woman should be hanged, drawn, and quartered!"

Mary smiled for a second, and continued her slow walk up and down.

"Madame de Noitier has gone out of my life for ever; let us dismiss her. I have told you this to explain my sudden appearance. Esther," coming to a standstill, "this is my third failure. What am I to do? Why should fate be so hard to me?"

"Fortune has been over bountiful to you, my dear one," Esther said, gently. "Beauty like yours to one in your position is a sorrow, not a blessing; at least, such has been your experience. But the world is not all alibis. There must be some good, generous, honourable people in it. Don't be downcast, darling! After all, you have me! I am not much, to be sure, but I am something."

They clung to one another in silence for a moment, and then Esther said, trying to speak as gaily as possible,—

"Now for supper. You shall talk no more till you have eaten. I hear Mrs. Lockhart's step on the stairs; and then, when you have told me everything about yourself, shall hear all my news. Yes, I am looking at my table. I am as busy as can be, and all thanks to you, my sweet, dear angel, Mary!"

Bending to and fro, chatting all the while, and diverting the good-natured landlady's attention as much as possible from Mary's quiet face, Esther soon had a table spread with a humble, yet, in its way, saintly little meal.

Mary sat back in her chair and watched her with eyes that were sad, yet full of love; and then, as Esther flitted away on some errand, she rose and wandered round the room. The walls were hung with sketches in water-colours, oils, pen-and-ink, sepia. In fact, every kind of drawing or painting was to be found in some shape or form, and among the heads that smiled down upon her Mary found the face-stroke of her own beautiful one predominated. She smiled slightly herself at this, but as she stood before a double frame that hung over the young artist's table her smiles changed to tears.

One of the portraits was herself, an exquisite sketch of a girl just leaving her childhood; the other was a fine man's head, with lofty brow and thoughtful eyes. It was the face of her father, her idol, her hero, dead and lost to her for ever.

"Ah! you are looking at my amulet!"

Esther said, gently, as she re-entered the room. "Do you remember, Mary, the day I stole that portrait? Poor Sir William! he never imagined I was such a conspirator; but he was so pleased. I have never forgotten all he said to me—how my heart swelled with his praise—and his praise was worth having. I think," Esther added, as she drew her friend gently to the table, "that he would be glad if he could know how well his darling's protégée had succeeded."

"Not protégée, Esther, friend! You were my friend then as you are now."

"My dear," Esther Gall said quietly. "You always called me your friend, and treated me as your equal; but facts are stubborn things, and there was a vast difference between you, Mary, only daughter of Sir William Temple, the great scientist and seignior of an old family, and I, Esther, seventh child of Reuben Gall, drunkard and livery yard owner! Don't you remember how

scandalised the whole of Brierley used to be because you insisted on taking me by the hand?"

"I remember nothing save that Esther Gall is my only friend," Mary said softly, "has been my only friend these past five years, since I was left all alone."

She put her small hand into Esther's thin, artistic one.

"And now," she continued, tenderly, "it is I who am proud to be permitted to claim friendship with one so clever, one who will be so celebrated as Esther Gall! Come, Esther!" before the other one could speak, "tell me how are you getting on? I see by your face you are doing well!"

"Better than I could ever have hoped. To-night it is too late, but to-morrow early you will come up to the studio and see how many commissions I have. You know, Mary, that I have said your head—that dear, beautiful head that got me into the Academy."

"Sold it, dear? No, you did not tell me this!"

"It was only settled last week. I have had several offers, but, somehow, I could not make up my mind to part with it. However," Esther said, laughing softly, "when it came to the offer of two hundred guineas, I felt I must not refuse; and so, darling, you are sold. I hope you don't mind, Mary?" this anxiously.

Mary's answer was gentle but emphatic. "I only feel very concerned. Fancy being worth two hundred guineas!" she said, with a pout on her lips. Then quickly, "What did you call it, Esther?"

"The most ordinary name in the world—'A woman's face.' The dealer who has bought it did not care for the title, but as it is his property now he can call it what he likes."

Mary put her elbow on the table, and her chin on her hand.

"I wonder," she said, in a halting way, "if it was recognised?"

"Your aunt knew it at once," Esther replied. "That piece of news came to my knowledge in the simplest way. I am teaching Lady Cosanza's daughters; and not long ago one of them asked me who set to me as my model for 'A woman's face.' I answered, a friend," and she said, quickly, "Oh! then, Lady Mostyn was young when she told mamma. She was certain the model must have been her niece, Madame Cosanza." I waited a moment, Mary, and then I said quite casually, 'Mme. Cosanza was very beautiful, was she not?' and the girl answered, 'Oh! yes, quite lovely; she was to have come out this same season as my sister Ethel, but Lady Mostyn says she disgraced herself and her family by marrying like she did,' and then, Mary, I quite loved my pupil, for she added, 'I feel so sorry for her whenever I see Lady Mostyn, for I am certain I should have done just the same as poor Mme. Cosanza, and have run away from her. She is so cold and hard, and she doesn't seem to care whether her niece is alive or dead; and, after all, Mme. Cosanza is only just the same age as my sister Ethel, and that is quite young, isn't it, Miss Gall?'"

Mary sat silent, her eyes fixed on the table before her.

"Cold and hard!" she repeated, bitterly, when she spoke at last. "Esther, I have often wondered what freak of nature could have made my father and my Aunt Helena brother and sister. There was not one single spark of resemblance between them. The two poles are not farther asunder than their two natures were!"

"Try not to think of her, darling," Esther said, tenderly. "What use? You only distress yourself in dwelling on such a subject. You will never seek to ally yourself with your aunt?"

"Never!" was the passionate answer. "Never—never! I will die! I will starve in the gutter; but go back to her—no! Esther, a thousand times no. You do not know what such a life would mean. In the world I have

met with bitterness and indignity, but it has come from strangers. And, after all, one is independent with strangers; but to take my aunt's charity and to endure all I should be called upon to endure! Ah! Esther, you love me. You could not urge me to do such a thing?"

Esther came and knelt beside her. "I urge you!" she said, her voice full of emotion. "My dearest, do I not know such a thing would be impossible? No, Mary, I would never let you return to Lady Mostyn. She ruined your young life; and now that you are a woman and have tasted such bitterness and sorrow, it would be more than you could bear to go back to one who would sting you at every turn, and thrust you with your folly! No. This is your home. Once again, darling, I say it. I am successful now. I earn money enough, more than enough, for us both. Do not seek another engagement. Stay with me. Here you will have no insult, no indignity. You will only take your due, for if it had not been for you and your dear father Esther Galt would never have come to London—never have had the opportunity of encouraging what poor little flame of art was in her—would never have been anything but a miserable, disappointed, depressed creature, struggling in a home that was full of troubles she would have been powerless to avert. Mary, you will stay with me? You will stay with me, my darling?"

Mary looked down on the face that was called so plain. To her it was beautiful. The soul, the sympathy, the love, the poetry, that shone in the clear, brown eyes gave a loveliness to the homely features, and transformed them completely.

She stooped, and once again kissed the broad, low brow.

"For a time, dear, I will stay," she said, "for a time. But you will not keep me always, Esther. I am happiest when I am trying to work; and when I am with strangers forgetfulness does not seem so hard."

Esther sat long into the late hours of the summer night. She had insisted on undressing and putting Mary to her much-needed rest; and when the beautiful eyes were closed she stole away to her own room, and crouching herself up in a favourite attitude, fell thinking over the state of the one being she loved best in the world.

"Does she care for him still, or were the words true she once spoke when she said it had been a madness with her, that had her aunt been kinder, had there been sympathy between them, she would have cut off her right hand before she would have done the rash thing she did? She was so young," Esther said to herself, tears of pathos rising to her eyes. "What did she know of the world, living, as she did, a child's life in the little old home at Brierley. Oh! when I think of him, of his wickedness to have wantonly broken a young girl's heart and life, I—I could almost kill him!"

She dropped on to her feet, and began to pace to and fro the narrow room, her hand to her head. "Will she speak to me about him this time, I wonder? I cannot bear to utter his name until she does, and yet how I long to know the truth! Sometimes, sometimes," Esther said dreamily to herself, "I have a sort of conviction that he lied to her—that the first wife he told her of was a myth. It seems so much more possible. There is no doubt he persuaded Mary to marry him, because he imagined she would inherit Lady Mostyn's money. He took her to be what the world called her—an heiress. Would he then deliberately contract a bigamous marriage, having before him every possibility of his crime being discovered in some way or other? No! No! Signor Paolo Cosanza was not such a fool. He was playing a big game, and it was altogether necessary Mary should be his wife. He never expected Lady Mostyn to do what she did publicly—renounce the poor child, and turn her back on her; and when this came his love for Mary soon vanished. She was a burden, and her

beauty was nothing like what it is now. Perhaps if the charming Signor could have known how lovely his child-wife would turn out he would have kept her in reserve to help him at some future time; for, to a man such as he, a face like my dear one's should have had some monetary value, one would suppose."

Esther stopped in her walk, and resumed her curious former perched-up position. "I am horribly worldly and beastly in my views of mankind," she said to herself sorrowfully. "That comes of knowing the world; and I must say when I remember what Mary's experiences have been, it helps to make one bitter and resentful. If she were only free—if he were dead, and gone utterly out of the world—then it would be different! She is a girl still! What is twenty-two! With such beauty as her's, life stretches before her. Poor Sir William! I am glad when I remember you are not here. How your heart would bleed to see your beloved child stranded on such a broken and impossible rock, with no friends, no home, nothing save what I can give her. You are best asleep, my benefactor; for," Esther said to herself with emotion, "in your world—at least I pray it may be so—you are spared the sorrow of watching those you love suffer!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE bright summer sunshine streaming into the small bedroom found Mary wide awake. She was very pale, and her head ached, but still her brain refused to rest. She had slept very little. It is hard to sleep when the heart is oppressed and troubled beyond all description; and to a nature delicate, refined, proud, like Mary's, the events of the last few years could mean nothing but a perpetual burden of misery. She was so young still; and yet the story of her life was written, and the motive set in continual shadow and sorrow. She lay back on her pillow recalling all Esther had said the night before, and reviewing once again the history of her past.

It would have been impossible to have pictured a sweeter or more peaceful childhood, alone with her father in his tiny cottage home.

Mary had no earlier recollections than this quaint old house. To her the world meant Brierley. She knew nothing beyond the small village; she did not wish to know. She grew up, reverencing and worshipping her father as something half divine, and the love Sir William gave to his one child, the fruit of his late marriage, the only thing left from a too brief dream of wedded happiness, was something passing the ordinary love of fathers.

Mary was his sunbeam, his fairy, his angel. What were disappointments and failures, what was poverty and the lack of sympathy when he had Mary to lie in his arms, and touch his worn face with her baby lips!

He had been called harsh names by his family, and the world had treated him as a harmless lunatic, because, in the fervour of his belief, in the intensity of his zeal and knowledge, he had spent thousands—all he had, in fact—upon the development and perfecting of certain scientific discoveries, which were the result of a lifetime of labour, and were born all too soon.

His sister, Lady Mostyn, widow of a man popularly called a millionaire, had no patience whatever with Sir William's scientific pursuits.

"You will end by dying a pauper and leaving your child to be looked after by your family," she said—not once, but a hundred times; and being gifted with shrewdness and common sense, Lady Mostyn was not far out.

Sir William died suddenly one morning of failure of the heart's action, and Mary was peremptorily informed her future home would be with her aunt in London.

Bitter indeed were the tears the child shed as she said farewell to Brierley and all who had been her friends.

Esther Galt was not there to kiss her good-bye; for a few months before, thanks to Sir William's kind interest, and also to his meagre purse, Esther had left Brierley for London, there to work her best in the Art Academy, in which she had managed to secure a place.

But though Esther was gone there were a hundred dear mementos of a happy, happy past; and Mary cried so bitterly, as she was carried away, that Lady Mostyn imagined with some uneasiness she was going to be ill.

But youth is endowed with marvelous, unconscious courage; and had Mary only met with gentle treatment the sorrow in her heart would have melted into love and gratitude to her new protector.

After all, it was the common story. There was no room for real sympathy and affection in Lady Mostyn's worldly breast. To her Mary was a burden, who might by proper training, possessing as she did the fore-shadowing of wonderful beauty, prove satisfactory to a certain extent.

There was declared war between the two from the beginning, for Mary would not hear a single word against her father's memory; and Lady Mostyn never lost an opportunity of sneering at her dead brother, and throwing his imperfections in his child's face.

This led to a miserable state of things. Mary's whole nature suffered. She grew sullen and resentful. She lived in herself alone, confiding in none, refusing the hand of friendship offered by the governess provided by Lady Mostyn to finish the girl's shockingly-neglected education.

It was in this mood that she fell into a trap that was carefully laid for her. She forgot how or where she first met the handsome, soft-eyed soft-voiced Italian. At some afternoon concert, probably, to which she and her governess had gone by orders, but the meeting was not marked on her memory by any particular reason. Only, somehow it became quite natural to her to see Signor Cosanza wherever she went; and also, somehow, she began gradually but surely to experience great pleasure in so doing.

Lady Mostyn always spent the winter abroad. Mary accompanied her to Nice, Rome, Florence, Paris, and wherever they might go there, too, would appear the dark, poetical face of Paolo Cosanza, an unknown musician, who was a stranger to Lady Mostyn or her world; but who had great ambitions and determinations to mix with that world, and be held in high esteem by it.

To such a man the fascination of women, no matter what class, or of what age or position, came as a matter of course; and Miss Brown, the stolid, clever, middle-aged governess, so carefully provided by Lady Mostyn to guard and teach Mary, was a strangely easy victim to a soft, low voice, and a pair of magnificent eyes.

The governess was but the stepping-stone to the girl, that delicate, lovely child—for Mary, though seventeen, looked much younger, who must inherit the entire fortune of the wealthy Lady Mostyn, her aunt.

With Miss Brown, only too glad to make excuses to bring her within speaking distance with the man she admired, Cosanza had ample opportunities for working his way with Mary.

Miserable in her gilded cage of a life sick at heart and sorrowful, she, poor child, was no match against such powers as he brought to bear upon her.

The end came quickly. One day Mary was missing. Miss Brown was frantic with fear, Lady Mostyn alarmed and angry. Of late Mary's growing beauty was assuming the form of compensation in her eyes.

Miss Brown was dismissed summarily for carelessness. Paris was searched throughout; and then came a letter written in a light, flowing Italian hand, informing Lady Mostyn that her niece was in the safe custody of her husband, Paolo Cosanza, but would be glad to see and communicate with her aunt as soon as possible.

Lady Mostyn's reply took the form of a lawyer's letter, in which M. and Madame Cosanza were informed curtly that Lady Mostyn refused to hold any communication whatever with them, and that she entirely and utterly disowned her niece from that day forward till the end.

As Mary sat pale and trembling, listening to the oaths and curses that fell from the lips of her new made husband over the failure of his plans and hopes, a coroner's inquest was being held at Dover over the body of a middle-aged woman who had committed suicide in a hotel, apparently in a fit of insanity, and who was proved to have been a governess, in the employ of Lady Mostyn.

Mary, as she lay now on her humble pillow beneath the shelter of Esther Galt's loving care, shivered again and again as she recalled the horror, the degradation, the ceaseless misery of the few months she spent as Paola Cosanza's wife. That time had grown into her memory like a bad dream.

She was not too young but that she realised to the full the thorough vileness of the man she had married and to whom she had given her first love. Each succeeding day brought forward some new trait of innate dishonour and wickedness.

She bore it as long as she could, for, poor child, she did not know what else to do. But when, one day, he treated her worse than usual, and then coolly and brutally informed her he was sick of her and her tears, and could abandon her whenever he chose, since their marriage had been a farce, and he had already another wife existing, a spirit of courage and despair rose in Mary's young heart.

She stole away quietly, made her way to Dover, thence to London; and one night, as Esther Galt was returning home from a late evening class, she stumbled over a fainting woman in her humble lodgings, lit a lamp, and discovered Mary.

From that day she constituted herself guardian of the broken-hearted, weak, miserable girl. She was never tired of thanking Heaven that she was able to do this for one who had given her so much love and sympathy in days gone by.

It seemed to Esther to be a distinct act of providence that Mary was brought to her this night, for she had been debating in her own mind whether or no she would now go to Paris and continue her studies there—urged, perhaps, by the thought that she might see her girl-friend, who had ceased to write since her fatal marriage; and had she done this, she trembled to think what Mary would have done.

The child was born dead, and all through Mary's terrible long illness Esther Galt slaved and toiled like six people to keep want and misery from the door. Fate was kind to her, for her talent began to make way slowly, but surely; and when Mary was well enough to rise from her bed, and think seriously over her ruined future, Esther was in a fair way of earning five to six pounds a week.

It was her one wish to keep Mary with her always, but she was too independent herself to urge another to live on charity; and so, in course of time, Mary went forth into the world to earn her own living.

Now she was returned for the third time—her third failure, as she said bitterly to herself. It was five years since she separated herself from her aunt, and never once in that time, not even when her young life had seemed to be passing away, would she humble her pride and beg for help or sympathy.

To the rest of her father's relations she was a stranger. He had mixed with none, and Mary's experience of her aunt held her back from approaching them.

Her mother had been an orphan child of a brother scientist of Sir William Temple's, and if she had sensations Mary never heard of them.

She was then, save for her one true, staunch friend, utterly alone in the world.

"Heaven bless her! Heaven bless her!"

she said to herself, as she lay and gasped at a pencil sketch of Esther's face, done by herself. "Shall I ever be able to return her goodness, even a little—the one, the only good creature in this hard, bitter world!" Then, as Mary thought this, a wave of colour dyed her cream-white skin, and her eyes deepened in colour.

"No, not the only one," she said, quickly. "I am indeed ungrateful." She put out her hand and took up a piece of cardboard that she had laid on her table last thing the night before. "Though I may never see him again, I must never—I can never forget his kindness. He has a good heart, I will swear to it; no one could doubt it who heard him speak! 'Lord Greville Earne!' He is one of the great ones of this earth. Perhaps if—I had done differently we might have met. Who knows? He is in Aunt Helena's world; but now—now what could there be between such as he, and such as I am? If he remembers me it will be, perhaps, to regret his generosity. No, no!" Mary said out loud, almost passionately, "I will not think that. Must I doubt all the world—doubt, when I have had proof of his difference to all the rest? There will never be a chance of meeting you again, Lord Greville Earne. When I have returned your money we shall be separated again—you in your path, I in mine. But though you may, and very naturally will, forget the woman who begged of you one night on the Digue at Ostend, I shall never forget my meeting with one who proved himself to be, in deed, and in truth, a good, generous man!"

She put the card away and dressed slowly and languidly. Her head was aching badly, and she felt weak and ill.

"Esther will lend me the money," she said to herself. "She will ask me nothing, and I will tell her nothing. It is not an easy story to tell, and I—I feel—Well, as it turned out, it was a wrong thing to have done; but"—she shivered—"it was to get away, to be once again in England, once more near Esther. Surely my great need will be my pardon for being unwomanly! If he believed and trusted me need I care? None knew of it, save our two selves, and he will have forgotten it very soon, perhaps already. So," with a sigh escaping her unconsciously, "I will think no more about it!"

"Don't interrupt me, Dick! Don't you see I'm writing?"

"I thought you were doing something phenomenal by the contortions of your face," Dick Fraser said, seating himself on a corner of the saloon table, and surveying his young cousin calmly through a cloud of tobacco smoke. "Who is your letter to, Dun? Your young woman?"

"Young woman, indeed!" repeated Lord Dunstan, in disguised tones. "No! To the mater, to tell her all about everything."

"Humph!" Dick Fraser said to himself, as he watched the pen splutter over the paper, "that will be rather difficult, I imagine!"

"Here," Lord Dunstan said, hastily blotting the paper, "just run your eye over that, Dick, and see if there are any awful mistakes!"

Mr. Fraser took the letter, read it slowly, throwing in an exclamation here and there as he went.

"Yacht Pearl, Ostend, August—"

"DEAREST MOTHER,—"

"I got your birthday letter and the watch all right. You are a dear old bird, and no mistake. Did you get a telegram I sent you the other night? Dick said you would not get it until the morning, which was a beastly nuisance. We shan't be able to leave Ostend for a few days. We've had a accident—('An accident, I fancy, Dun!')—nobody of us hurt—('Oh! Dun! Dun!') But two days ago Mrs. Archdale and her two girls came to lunch. You remember Oswald? He's here, too, and I am jolly glad, for it's a bit dull with no one except these stupid chaps to talk to—"

('Never was called stupid in my life before, Dun!')—Well, Mrs. Archdale came to lunch, and brought Audley and Ione; and just as they were going to go ashore—('Poor Aunt Katherine!')—Ione slipped down the cabin stairs, and has hurt herself awfully.

"Of course, Gray had to have a doctor got, and give her up his berth. And there she is now, and she can't be moved; and Mrs. Archdale is in an awful way, and so is Audley, but, of course she'll be all right in a day or two, only she has to be kept quiet. And so you see, dear mater, we must stay where we are till she is better; and though I'm awfully sorry for Ione—and I must say she's very plucky—I can't help saying it's a beastly nuisance, as we wanted to get away. All the other chaps have gone, except Dick and Sir William. Paul Angelotti has a dozen invitations to different places, and Fellows and Bradley have gone to Dieppe. How are my animals? Give them all my love, and be sure and tell Ocho, poor little chap, he can have any one of them he likes, and that Uncle Dun will soon be home to play with him. Oh! by the way, isn't it funny? Oswald has just told me his mother is going to Yorkshire as soon as Ione can be moved to Bring, which is just close to us; so you'll see something of them, and that will be jolly."

Dick Fraser put down the letter without any comment on the grammar, and in a few moments walked away.

"So it is to be a game in real earnest, is it?" he said to himself. "Of course, I realised this accident as a good try on, but when it comes to going to Yorkshire.—Well, we shall see what we shall see!"

(To be continued.)

A PATCH OF MIGNONETTE.

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CHAPTER X.

LADY LYLE MYSTIFIES HER STEPSON.

AGAIN the crackling of twigs and dry brushwood herald the progress of Lord Lyle through the thicket; but he does not go straight to the house.

By taking a circuitous route he finds himself on the smooth lawn, and very near the mignonette bed, the grave of the old dog Lion, and "mammy's place of pilgrimage," as the young Lord of Lyle calls it.

The summer moon that witnessed his good-night to Florrie has come out from her white cloud, and shines bright and clear above the darkly-outlined trees.

The young man peeps in at the entrance to the arbour, and seeing it untenanted enters, and seats himself by the small centre table. He can think of only one subject to-night. He is in love! and his heart is full of the girl he loves!

He does not wish to meet his step-mother just yet. He wants to be alone—to think of Florrie—only Florrie. There is no room in his heart or thoughts for any other.

Lord Lyle is little more than one-and-twenty, and his own master; yet there are a few people in the world he does not care to offend, foremost of these is his step-mother.

He knows that he is perpetrating a great indiscretion—an unpardonable offence against society—in wooing and wedding this very poor and beautiful girl, who does not know her own parentage, being only an adopted child, brought up by an elderly woman, the keeper of a chandler's shop in Chelsea, where she was a perfect stranger in the neighbourhood. Nobody knew whence she came.

She had been well paid for the girl at first; but of late years the payments had fallen off, then finally ceased.

But Mrs. Finch expected it, and so made no trouble of it. She would rather have the payment stopped than have the relations come

forward and claim the girl, whom she loved as if she had been her own child.

Mrs. Finch had "moved" from the district in which she resided when the child was first placed in her charge, and set led in Chelsea for the sole purpose of getting out of the way of those who had a natural claim to the custody of the little girl.

The good woman had been a servant in her youth, and it was her idea that the very best thing she could do for Florrie would be to get her into service in a good family.

She considered there was less temptation, fewer snares and pitfalls into which silly, unwary young girls might fall, than among the millinery and dressmaking classes.

So poor Mrs. Finch was horrified to find that after all her precaution her foster-daughter had managed to get a lover of whom she did not approve. She didn't like maslars, and always regarded Mr. Carew as one of the most pronounced type.

"He is too much of a lardy-da! I never did like city clerks, and I ain't a-going to," she hotly declared in one of their arguments on the subject.

"Mr. Carew is quite a gentleman, mother!" Florrie answered with much spirit. She always called Mrs. Finch mother.

"He's a great deal too much of a gentleman, that's what he is, my dear. Now, if he were only a respectable mechanic 'avin' about thirty bob a-week, I wouldn't mind it!"

Our hero—we hardly know which of his names or title to call him in his double character of Lord Lyle and Mr. Carew—had heard all this from his fiancée, and enjoyed the whole thing as a capital joke; but he thinks it over very calmly to-night as he sits in the shady arbour and recalls Florrie's vexation at being brought up to domestic service.

"I love her. She is dearer to me than my life. We are pledged to each other, but the dear girl has a suspicion of my rank. It might be better for both if we had never met, but I am bound by honour not to back; still, if she will not get married at once, I shall go away, and she will be getting on to be an old woman ere I set foot on the shores of England again."

"By Jove, who is that! It is a woman. It must be mammy. It is, with that white cloud wrapped round her head to keep the night-air off. She is so frightened of the night-air. There—she stops. Her usual pilgrimage to a dog's grave. Bosh! She must be going wrong. A dog's grave—I remember the day he died—I was only a boy then, but I remember somebody came to see her."

"I never heard who he was. Somebody whom Lord recognised, and nearly went mad with joy at the sight of, but Lady Lyle tore him away, and shut him up in a room, where he howled and jumped about, breaking the ornaments and making the most fearful noises. Then all was quiet, and Lady Lyle went herself to see how the old dog was, and she found him lying dead on the carpet, with blood flowing from his mouth."

"Her shrieks brought all the household to the spot. My father was not in at the time, but on his return he insisted upon sending for a veterinary surgeon to examine the dog, whose verdict was that the animal's death was caused by the breaking of a blood-vessel in the heart through some great grief or excitement."

"I remember the general surprise and indignation to which Lyle's mysterious death gave rise. He was a favourite with all. I can still recall the bitter grief I felt on seeing Lyle lie dead in the stable, just before his burial under the mignonette yonder."

"Years ago, before she came among us, there was an old well just where that mignonette is now. I remember with what a sensation of fear I used to peer down the dark, cavernous month, and wonder what was at the bottom which I could not see."

"When my father married his second wife she begged him not to sell the place by the river, and so he kept The Willows. She

was charmed with everything but the old well. That seemed to inspire her with horror, and my father had it filled up with mould and rubbish to please her."

"Here it was that I afterwards learned my lady had the old dog buried in the clay at the mouth of the well, and I learned that she intended to have flowers planted on his grave, but I did not expect the flower-planting would take the form of a mignonette bed eight feet square, or that my stepmother intended to have that beautiful marble shaft placed on the dog's grave."

"I was surprised when I came here for my holidays the following summer. My father only laughed, and called it her 'fad.'"

"I was still more surprised when, later on, I found that she paid daily visits to her dog's grave; and that while there she sometimes prayed and wept, and indulged in other exhibitions of sorrow. She has done so ever since. My father's death did not make any alterations in her."

"Look at her now! She has remained on her knees immovable all this time. If I were only near enough to see her face at this moment I would find that she is either praying or crying. By Jove! when would she do so at my father's grave? Oh, here she comes!"

He looked around with startled eyes, but there was no place where he could hide. He could not leave the arbour without meeting that dark-robed figure with the white cloud wrapped round the bowed head.

"I must not let her think I saw her," he murmurs, as leaning his arms on the table he rests his forehead upon them.

The figure approaches slowly, softly, making no sound. She pauses at the entrance. Coming out of the clear moonlight she cannot discern objects in the gloom of the arbour, but her eyes becoming used to the semi-darkness she catches sight of the bowed figure by the table. She starts violently, goes a little closer and peers at the bowed head. She does not see very clearly in the dim light. She sees the head, but cannot be quite sure of the identity of the owner, for she utters a wild shriek and falls on her knees beside him.

"Oh, Lion—Lion, why are you here?" she cries, in agonised tones, and falls forward on her face just as the young man starts up in a state of wildest excitement. To gather the slender form in his strong arms and place her on the seat was the work of an instant.

She has not fainted quite, but her eyes are closed, and the young man does not wish himself to be the first object they would light upon when they opened.

Placing the motionless woman in a safe position he went out of the arbour on tip-toe and round to the back where he could see without being seen through the woven greenery, of which the walls and roof were formed.

She soon revived, and looking around with a mystified air, tried to recollect herself. She murmured a few half-articulate words. Then she started to her feet, as if she just remembered, gesticulating wildly, she hissed out one or two disconnected sentences.

"Alone! There is nobody here! Oh! thank Heaven, it was a dream—only a dream—a waking fancy! Oh! I shall be ill! I feel I shall be ill!"

And gathering her white wrap about her head and shoulders she tottered rather than walked away from the arbour and disappeared in the shrubbery.

Then Lord Lyle came out in the white circle of moonlight on the lawn, and taking off his hat, ran his fingers through his hair with a puzzled expression.

"What the devil does it all mean? The mystery deepens. I am getting mixed up in a tangle of strange incidents that I cannot understand. I should be sorry to think wrong of mammy. I always loved her for her own sake, and I must respect her always as my father's widow; but just now she is a centre of mystery that requires explanation. She did not recognise me to-night. She mistook

me for somebody else. But who? Who did she take me for? and why was she so terrified? Why does she kneel by a dog's grave in an abandon of grief? That dog has been dead nearly ten years. By Jove!" and swinging round, he strode across the grass-plot and plunged into the thicket and hurried towards the house.

CHAPTER XI.

"Peter! Are you here?"

"Yes-s. I came in here hoping to have half-an-hour's quiet."

"What do you mean, Mr. Prodders? and who do you think you're talking to? I just received this telegram from Dover. He will be here to-day," Mrs. Prodders says, looking very hot and angry as she stands in the doorway holding the yellow missive in one hand, and a gold-rimmed glass in the other.

"Who is he?"

"Peter, I haven't patience with you. How can you be so stupid? Why, Mr. Stewart, your late brother's partner, has telegraphed from Dover to let me know that he will be with us this evening."

"Well, let him come, Harriet! Let him come!"

"Oh! that's your gratitude to your brother's partner!"

"I am not under any obligation to my brother's partner that I know of, Harriet."

"After all your brother Joe done for you, Peter, this is your gratitude!"

"I wish Joe left his money to his partner instead of to me, and I wish I was back in my place in the city again, where I could always enjoy myself in my own way—a chop or steak, and a pint of four half. That's the style for me!"

"Well, I'd rather live quieter myself, but it's the girls, Mr. Prodders. It's for the dear girls' sake."

"Oh, stuff, Harriet! Why can't we live somewhere without all this fuss? The girls! Why, even they are changed. They're ashamed of their own father now, so they are," Mr. Prodders says, with a wheezing in his chest and a thickness in his speech that indicates a habit of imbibing strong waters, which habit otherwise leaves its mark on him. There are red patches on his cheeks, red pimples about his nose, and his eyes are watery and bloodshot.

"Well, Mr. Prodders, we must think of the girls. They've got to get married off our hands, don't you know, and men now-a-days think twice before they marry any girl, unless she's well connected."

"I want my girls to marry men of their own class, who won't despise their father."

"But they must go into society, Peter, the society their wealth entitles them to."

"Both the money! We were a great deal happier when we were poorer. What time do you expect Mr. Stewart from Dover?"

"By the 6.25 train, and I give a five o'clock tea, and expect a few distinguished people here. To-morrow we are going to a garden-party, and the next day is the regatta. What time have I to attend to Mr. Stewart? I want you to meet him at Charing Cross at 6.25."

"I meet him—I am you mad, Harriet! I go to Charing Cross, and speak to a gentleman! I leave that to you! I find the money, you do the polite. You and the girls, that cost so much money, ought to do the polite between you. Tell Mister Stewart that he's as welcome as the flowers in May, that everything and everybody in this house are at his service. I'll see him to-morrow, maybe, but I must do it in my own way; I'm too old to learn fresh fads."

"Oh, well! I must send the brongham to meet him at the station."

"What's Harry doing? He's masher enough to go meet Mr. Stewart."

"Has some other engagement, and can't go."

"We'll see about that. Just send him in

here. Harry is going on too fast; he must be pulled up with a jerk!"

Mrs. Producers turns to leave the room without making a reply. Ascending the front staircase, she goes in the direction of her daughter's rooms, but stops suddenly on hearing her son's voice in one of the corridors.

"Pon my soul, you're the prettiest girl I've seen for ages. Let me—er—tell you, my dear, that you are a great deal too pretty to be a servant. You ought to be—er—a lady—with—er—a Victoria to drive in the aw—row—and a—box at the opera!"

"Allow me to pass, please!" came in the clear, firm voice of the new housemaid.

"Don't look so doosed cross, my dear—er—it don't become you. The mater—er—ain't about. She's gone up to speak to the—aw—gov'nor."

"No, I am here, sir, and heard every word you said! Your pa wants you at once! Go and hear what he has to say. As for you, girl, I shall see you later on!"

So saying, Mrs. Producers passed her hopeful son with a look of deepest disdain on her face.

The graceful figure of the girl moves with a quick, springy step before her, and stops at the door of the young ladies' dressing-room, at which she knocks, and in answer to a voice from within she turns the handle and enters.

"Oh, I'm so glad your come. I want you so much to help me with these bows. I want longer loops. Oh, here's ma! Ma, may I have Florrie to help me? Sallie has Annita."

"Certainly not! Annita must help both of you. Florrie, I have something to say to you, I may as well say it now. I don't approve of having young people in my employment who are given to flirting. I caught you just now flirting with my son in the corridor!" Mrs. Producers says, in a supercilious tone.

"You caught—me flirting, madam?"

"Don't madam me, if you please! I don't allow Mr. Producers to madam me!"

"You may have caught your son insulting me. He stopped me and stood in my way on purpose to obstruct my passage." Florrie answers bravely, with flashing eyes and crimson cheeks.

"Don't be saucy, young woman! How independent you are. Will it surprise you to hear that we saw you yesterday evening talking to a young gentleman we know well—just the same you were seen with the evening before? It won't do. We'll have to part at the end of the month!"

"We shall part to-day, madam!" answers Florrie, excitedly, and forgetting Mrs. Producers' injunction against the word "madam."

"No—no—not to-day. I am going to have company, and shall want you!"

"But I shall not stay! It is cruel what I have had to put up with since I've been here!"

"If you go to-day I shall not pay you!"

"No, ma'am, I don't wish you to!"

"Oh! then what do you propose doing now?"

"I shall go to the station, and wire to London I want somebody to come down and see to my luggage. When I come back from the station I shall pack my boxes and have them ready. I shall go up to town as soon as possible afterwards."

"Pon my word, young woman, your behaviour is rather nice for a parlour-maid!"

"The idea of giving herself such airs!" chimes in Sallie.

"I am sorry she's going. She is so handy, and got such good taste. Fancy Lord Lyle standing talking to her! It won't do, you know. She'll have to go."

"I am sorry," Carrie whispers back.

"Carrie, have you arranged that basket of strawberries to be sent to Lady Lyle?" Mrs. Producers inquires of her younger daughter.

"Yes, ma."

"May I trouble you, as you will have to pass The Willows on your way to the station, to leave these strawberries for Lady Lyle?"

Carrie had vanished from the room, but returned in a few seconds, bearing a pretty fancy basket filled with large red berries, looking ripe and luscious as they nestle in their broad green leaves.

"Yes, madam, I'll take them," Florrie answers again, forgetting Mrs. Producers' objection to being styled "Madam."

The next moment she had walked from the room with a firm step and tightly-compressed lips, taking the basket of strawberries with her.

CHAPTER XII.

FLORIE'S VISIT TO "THE WILLOWS."

THE WILLOWS is a very pretty place, with the glory of the summer sunshine upon it. The close-shaven lawn and drooping foliage are of the brightest green. The flowers in stand and *parterre* are radiant, while above the sky is like a dome of light blue and white vapour.

The charming bijou house of Lady Lyle, with its long windows flashing through a trailing mantle of virginia creeper, looks a fit home for such a woman.

A fit spot, indeed, with its air of seclusion, mystery, and romance, and she, with her slender, black-robed figure, her youthful face, and snow-white hair, her mournful black eyes, and refined poetic nature.

Standing behind the geraniums in the open French window on this lovely summer morning she looks very graceful and interesting, though wholly unconscious of the beauty by which she is surrounded.

An expression of sadness pervades her beautiful face. Her eyes seem to look far away to where the lawn slopes down to the river, and glimpses of heaving water flash between the entangled boughs of limes and chestnuts.

A figure moving on the lawn causes the dark eyes to turn from their fixed stare. Then, with a quick start, she steps back from among the geraniums, and taking a position behind the lace curtain watches the approach of a young girl, tall and slender, and very graceful, and, from what Lady Lyle can see of the averted face under the brim of the sailor-hat she wore, her ladyship judged her to be very pretty indeed.

She carries a dainty basket of either fruit or flowers, the lady cannot determine which.

"Who is she? Where does she come from?" are among the queries her ladyship asks herself, as she watches the steady advance of the fair trespasser, until she disappeared up the portico steps; as she did so Lady Lyle caught sight of the strawberries.

"Ah," she thought, "Mrs. Producers promised to send me some of her fine strawberries by her new parlour-maid that I might have an opportunity of seeing what a pretty girl she is. This must be the young person."

A peal at the visitors' bell is followed by the appearance of the footman, who announced that "a young lady wished to see her ladyship, and wouldn't send any message."

"Show her in, Hutchins."

Leaning back in her chair in languid grace Lady Lyle waits with drooping eyelids and lashes that nearly sweep her cheeks as she lets them fall over the dark eyes.

The door opens, and the footman ushers the young girl in. Florrie advances with a quick, elastic step to within a yard of the lady's chair.

"If you please, my lady, Mrs. Producers sends these strawberries with her compliments to your ladyship. Mrs. Producers also sends a note, and bade me wait for an answer," Florrie says, in her fresh, young voice, the tone of which seems to send a thrill through the frame of the *blond* woman of the world; for her languor vanishes, and the long lashes revealing the splendid dark orbs, that

stare with a startled expression into the soft, dove-like eyes of the girl as she takes the note mechanically from her hand without removing her eyes from her face.

"You are the young person Mrs. Producers has been speaking about. You are—er—"

"I am parlour-maid at Hazel Hollow, madam," Florrie replies briskly, and looking quite unabashed. She does not look shy or nervous or lose her self-possession in the presence of the lady.

"Don't you think you have mistaken your calling in going to service? Don't you think there are many ways by which a young girl like you could earn a livelihood besides making a drudge of yourself?"

"Well, madam," Florrie says, with a lovely blush, "Mrs. Finch, the good woman who had charge of bringing me up—"

"Who had charge of bringing you up! What do you mean—Mrs. Finch? Mrs. Finch? I have heard the name before. Who is Mrs. Finch?" the lady asks, in a startled voice.

"I call her mother, but she's not my mother—she told me so."

"Is Mrs. Finch a widow, or has she a husband? Is she young, or is she old? Tell me, quick!" the lady cries with deep emotion, as she rises slowly to her feet and clutches the table for support.

"Mrs. Finch is a widow with one boy. Finch was her second husband."

"Do you know her first husband's name?"

"Yes, my lady. His name was Foebrook. She always called me Florrie Foebrook."

"Good gracious! And where does Mrs. Foe—Foebrook live now?" her ladyship asks, that terrified look still in her eyes.

"Mrs. Finch lives in Pimlico-road. She keeps a chandler's shop, and her name is over the door."

"Has she ever told you the name of your real mother?" Lady Lyle asks, in a scarcely audible whisper.

"No, madam. She told me that a lady used to come regularly once a quarter and pay her for my keep, but that lady has not talked upon Mrs. Finch for years."

"Keeps a chandler's shop in Pimlico-road. A widow with one little boy," the lady repeats slowly, as if committing the words to memory.

"And now about this note from Mrs. Producers. It is an invitation to five o'clock tea, and I don't think I can go. I am afraid not. Are you going back to Hazel Hollow?"

"No, my lady. I am going to the station to send a telegram to London."

"Oh, indeed! To Mrs. Finch's?"

"Yes, madam, to Mrs. Finch's. I am going to leave Mrs. Producers to-day, or to-morrow at the latest, and—"

"Going to leave Mrs. Producers! Why?" the lady exclaims excitedly.

"I don't like her, and we don't agree!" Florrie answers, frankly.

"You have not been with her long?"

"Not quite a week. I gave her notice this morning that I would leave at once."

"Ah, well! I may be able to get something better for you. You will go to Mrs. Finch's in Pimlico-road when you leave Mrs. Producers?"

"Yes, madam."

"Then I shall know where to find you if I want you. Your name is Florrie, is it not? You are too pretty a girl to be friendless. I will be a friend to you. Mrs. Producers' daughters would be sure to be rude to you. They would be jealous of your face and figure, low-bred, vulgar girls like those, and so plain, too! But Mrs. Producers is very good to send me these splendid strawberries. I must write a note thanking her for the strawberries, and excusing myself from the five o'clock tea. Are there any visitors at Hazel Hollow at present?"

"No, madam; but they are expecting some one. There are preparations going on for a visitor, a gentleman, I think, and somebody of importance."

"Ah, indeed!"

"I must go now, my lady. I shall be late. I shall write, but I shall not wait for an answer. I must get back."

"Then good-morning, my dear, if I do not see you again. I shall either see or write to you at Mrs. Finch's."

And to Florrie's great surprise Lady Lyle seized both her hands and pressed them warmly, at the same time kissing her on the hot cheek. Just at that moment the front door is shut with a bang.

"Who is going out?" queries Lady Lyle, turning back to look through the window. "Oh! It is Lord Lyle. He is going on the river, I suppose, as he has got his boating flannels on."

Florrie remembering the ill-natured allusions of the Misses Prodgers tried to peer from behind the lady, but she only caught a glimpse of a tall figure clad in picturesque blue and white striped flannels; but there is something very familiar in the motion of those finely-developed limbs, and the long strides with which they bear their owner towards the boat house.

Something in the air, the gait, the carriage, even the close-cut hair at the back of his head, struck her as being familiar.

She loitered a little that she may not overtake him, as she does not feel equal to a meeting just now. So the figure in blue and white flannel has passed out of sight when Florrie goes down the portico steps and out on the sunlit carriage drive.

She is moving along blindly, feeling sick and giddy, with all Lance Carew's treachery uppermost in her mind. She did not pause or look up until she passed through the lodge gates. She felt if she looked to the right or left that she must fall down.

She reaches the high road, and turning down a narrow lane sat down on a green bank out of sight of the road, and clasping her hands over her face burst out sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Oh, I must never, never see him again. Oh, Lance! Lance! I cannot bear to lose you. I cannot—I dare not see you again! Who am I? What am I? I have no father, no mother. Who were they? Who were they?"

"Florrie!"

She started to her feet as that familiar voice thrilled her whole being.

"Whatever are you doing here? Why, you are crying! Tell me, darling, what is the matter?"

Florrie, raising her tear-dimmed eyes, saw before her the man she saw from the window at The Willows—the man in blue and white flannels.

She shrank away from him after that first furtive glance, her whole being quivering with some strong emotion.

He seized her hand and held it firmly.

"What does it all mean? I must know why you are here alone in this bye-lane at this time of day!" Lord Lyle says, gravely.

"I shall answer your lordship's question with another. What did your lordship ever speak to a poor girl like me for, and masquerade as a city clerk on purpose to deceive me?"

"Simply because I love you, child, because I loved you from the first moment I beheld you, and thinking that whatever chance Lance Carew had of winning you, Lord Lyle would have none at all. So I kept you in ignorance of my real rank."

"And for what end did you try to win me, my lord? You could not marry a girl like me!"

"Ah, but I would! You have always doubted me, but I would, and shall convince you, that you wronged me!" he says, regretfully.

"Ah, well, I have found out your secret, and it does not do you credit, Lord Lyle!"

"Can you blame me for the part I have played? But you have not told me yet why you are here. Has anybody insulted you? Speak, my dear girl. Why do you cry so?"

Even if I did deceive you a little, it was with a good intention."

"Oh! I forgive you! I freely forgive the past, and wish your lordship good-day."

And with her pocket-handkerchief pressed to her mouth, Florrie was turning away, but the young man seized one of her hands and held her firmly.

"You must tell me why you treat me so badly. I have a right to know. Is it because I am Lord Lyle instead of Lance Carew, the city clerk? You are very unjust."

"I must not have any more to say to Lord Lyle. I dare not think of what I have escaped. If I had not found you out as I did, you would have married me in a false name, if you married me at all!" she says, with flushing cheeks and resentful eyes, as she struggles to release her hand from his tightening grip.

"Please let go my hand, my lord, and allow me to pass!" she says sharply, looking very hot and angry, and trying to shrink away from him.

"Then you never loved me! and all your promises have been false! But I would not marry you in a false name. My full name is John Lancelot Carew; my title, Baron Lyle. I shall always hate the title if it causes us to drift apart. I shall go to London to-morrow to see Mrs. Finch, and ask her to plead for me," he says, earnestly.

"She will not. Mrs. Finch hates aristocrats, and will give you no encouragement."

"Shall I see you this evening?" he asks, in a loud, pleading voice.

"I don't think so, my lord. I am going to London this evening, if I can get away."

"For how long?"

"For good."

"For good! Does Mrs. Prodgers know this?"

"Yes, my lord, I told her this morning."

"And you would go without a word? Oh! Florrie, you do not love me—you never loved me, and it is useless to try to force you to love me. I shall stick to my resolution. Good-bye, dear, I shall not torture you any farther. In twenty-four hours I shall be out of England!"

Lifting both hands to his lips, he let them drop, turned on his heel and walked away.

She did not speak; but she stood watching his receding figure till he was out of sight, then, with a cry of anguish, she threw herself on the green bank, moaning—

"Oh! Lance, Lance! My love, my love!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE STORY OF LION CASTLEMAINE.

The sunny summer day creeps on. Mrs. Prodgers' five o'clock tea is a thing of the past. It has been a great success. The china, the flowers, the dresses, the attendants, evoked the envy and admiration of every lady present.

The last guest has departed, and the hostess tired, but triumphant, has seated herself beside her eldest daughter, Mrs. Skirrit, to whom she is giving a glowing description of the departed guests and their dresses.

Swiftly along the dusty white highway the Prodgers' brougham is bowling towards Hazel Hollow, on its return journey from Charing Cross, whither in the hot noon it had gone to meet and convey to the delightful river-side home of the Prodgers their expected visitor, Mr. Stewart, the partner of the late Joseph Prodgers.

Carrie had accompanied her brother. That astute young lady had been conjecturing what sort of person this Mr. Stewart might be, and had come to the conclusion that he must be a rich man—richer even than her Uncle Joe.

She found that Mr. Stewart was unmarried, and it occurred to Miss Carrie that this millionaire from the antipodes might prove either a very eligible party to marry, or a kind of fairy god-father, so she made up her mind

to be very civil to him, and volunteered to accompany Harry to London.

Her offer was gladly accepted by that young gentleman, who was in a very ill-tempered frame of mind for having to go at all, especially alone.

Mrs. Prodgers and Sallie were very irate with Carrie for taking it into her silly little head at the last moment to absent herself from the five o'clock tea, and so deprive the event of the charming effect of her lovely new tea-gown that would have excited the envy and admiration of the guests.

But Carrie enjoyed herself much better during her trip to Charing Cross and back. On the way to town her brother Harry amused her. Harry is, of course, the master of the family.

"What do you think of the—er—gov'nor, Carrie—sending me to fetch the old fogey from the station? I would have said no flat, only I want to borrow a fifty from him," he draws as he chews the knob of his stick, and stares vacantly from the window.

"You are extravagant, Harry. As much money as pa has, you would make him bankrupt in a year if you had your fling!"

"Ah, you—er—can't make the gov'nor understand what the feelings of a gentleman are. Haw! when I—er—ask him for the loan of fifty pounds—er—he'll growl like a bear with a broken head."

During their homeward drive the brother and sister were much impressed by their new friend, Mr. Stewart.

He is a perfect gentleman and evidently accustomed to good society.

He has quite unobtrusive manners, and a low-toned voice with a ring of sadness in it.

Later on Carrie confessed that she had fallen in love with Mr. Stewart at first sight, although he is old enough to be her grandfather, and the pair were the best of friends long before they reached Hazel Hollow.

And the fair Carrie has congratulated herself for missing five o'clock tea, and has marked Mr. George Stewart for her prey.

Her new gown will keep for future triumphs, she thinks.

Mrs. Prodgers' drawing-room at Hazel Hollow is large and lofty, with three long French windows opening on a balcony crowded with rarest plants and shrubs; and draped with sweeping curtains of salmon-pink silk and rich lace.

The walls and ceiling are handsomely and artistically decorated, and the room is filled with rich furniture and all the rare and beautiful things that luxurious tastes could suggest or unlimited wealth procure.

To fastidious and refined taste the colour and gilding might be too much on evidence, some of the furniture too heavy, the flowers too profuse, and the colours not artistically blended.

But the splendour of Mrs. Prodgers' drawing-room is lost upon the grave, weary-looking man who is ushered in by the sprightly Carrie and the cigarette-smoking Harry with his effected society airs.

Mrs. Prodgers and her daughter Sallie are there to receive their new friend. Mr. Prodgers could not be persuaded to come out of his den.

"Oh, ma! here we are at last, and Mr. Stewart is so tired. Ah, you don't know Mr. Stewart. Let me introduce you," and Carrie goes through the ceremony of introducing her new friend to her mother and sister with a mock dignity that brought a smile to the grave lips of the stranger.

That gentleman seems to look quite favourably on the mistress of the house, whose presence seems to inspire him with confidence.

Mrs. Prodgers looks quite comely in her rich tea-gown. Prosperity sits well upon her. She is gaining flesh lately, and it suits her. Mr. Stewart thinks he has found a friend, and he seats himself near her and commences the conversation.

"Fancy living out there all those years and

not wishing to come back to England," the lady observes, when they had discussed the career of Mr. Stewart and his partner Joseph Progers—those two who had been thrown together so oddly, and became possessed of such enormous wealth together.

"No, I never wished to come back. I left England in disgust with everything and everybody in it. I went to a new land, commenced a new life, made new friends, a new home, formed new ideas, and became a new man altogether. No, I never wished or intended to visit England again. And you will smile and think me a fit subject for a lunatic asylum when you hear why I came here at last."

"Indeed. Are you going to tell me why you changed your mind?" she lady answers, with an amused laugh.

"I am," he answers, quickly, and raising his eyes to the face of his hostess, asked solemnly, "Mrs. Progers, are you a believer in dreams?"

The question seems a poser that the lady does not seem to know how to answer. She flushes a little.

"Well, no. I don't place much faith in dreams."

"Not if the scenes or incidents are so life-like that when you awake you cannot believe that it was a dream? Not if night after night you dream the same thing over and over again, and every object, sight and sound is engraven on your brain when you awake; and the whole tissue seems to point out a way to unravel an awful mystery that surrounds the fate of a lost and well-beloved friend?"

The smile fades from his listener's face. "Is the man mad?" she thinks. As he warms with his subject he gets more excited. His pale face is crimson, and the perspiration stands in great beads upon his forehead.

His vehemence frightens her. She is terribly afraid that he is mad, this uninvited guest who has come across the seas to terrify her out of her wits.

"Are you are frightened. My dear madam, do not upset yourself, I am perfectly sane, as sane as you are. As I want you to help me to discover the fate of my poor friend. I shall tell you my dream, then you can judge for yourself."

"I shall give you a short outline of my friend's story. I must be very brief. I shall know before many days whether my dream—or rather dreams—were the outcome of a shattered intellect."

"I am a native of Cumberland. My father was an extensive landed proprietor. I was my father's second son, my brother was five years my senior. Adjoining our land was the estate of the Castlemaine's, an old and honourable county family."

"They had an only son two years younger than I. As boys we were inseparable friends. We fished, hunted, and rowed together. We were at Eaton together, and we fell in love together, and with the same woman."

"She was beautiful, with the rare dark loveliness to be seen only in the south. We quarrelled about her, we fought about her, and we two inseparable friends became deadly enemies over this woman."

"At last my better nature triumphed, I went to my friend and offered to resign my claim, and go away to some foreign land, but he would not listen to me!

(To be continued.)

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

—O—

WHAT I have to say is not fiction, but fact. The heroine of my "strange story"—and no less true than strange—died many years ago. Most of her generation have followed her to the land the inhabitants of which may or may not re-visit ours in visible guise. The Lord of the quick and the dead alone knows how this may be. There is no reason why I should not put into print what many of

her contemporaries heard from her own lips, not only at the date of the mysterious occurrence that shadowed her life, but when a half-century had softened the grisly outlines of the horror, and she could contemplate it in perspective, almost with calmness, although never without awe.

I, Nora Bryant, who write this, was a girl of eighteen when, at the close of a May day fifty years ago, my father's carriage set me down at the door of my dear friend, Agnes Hunt, at Arnfield, in Warwickshire.

Arnfield was then—and may be now—a pretty village, straggling leisurely along the banks of the Avon, to which it owed its being and continued life.

We had pitied Agnes Lester, the belle of two seasons, not because she married Harry Hunt, a promising young lawyer, but for having to live in the old world place.

The wedding had taken place in December, and this was my first visit to her new abode.

It was a pretty cottage, set back about twenty yards from the roadway, which differed in nothing from a country highway, except that there were more houses on and near it. I had just time to observe that the Hunt's cottage was a story and a half high, with dormer-windows in the roof; that it was neat and newly-painted; that the gate in the front palings was overarched by a bower of honeysuckle, and the front porch overrun with a multiflora rose tree, now in effluant bloom—when Agnes ran out through the open door and down the gravel-walk to the carriage.

She was a trifle thinner than when I had last seen her, but animated and joyous, with vivacity that did not abate while she attended me to her own chamber on the first floor, pouring out salutations, queries, and interjections in her old frank, impetuous way.

"You must stay in here with me until Harry comes home," she said, helping me to lay aside my travelling garb. "He went to Bristol day before yesterday and may not get back before Saturday."

"Your first separation— isn't it?" asked I, struck with something not quite natural in her manner.

"Yes. He was obliged to go—on business," adding the last word as it might be an afterthought.

While she spoke she was re-arranging some clothing hung in a press to make room for that I had taken off. Her hands wavered, and she kept her face turned from me.

With the slight, (and insufferable), touch of superior scorn of a fancy-free-as-yet maiden for the sentimental feelings of "young married folks," I feigned to overlook her emotion. She might pine at heart for the absent mate, but she did me the justice to be sincerely delighted at my coming. I would content myself with that for the present, and tolerate a weakness peculiar to her position; so I made talk of all sorts of news, and my journey, taking pains not to ask a question, until presently she showed me a sunny face, that was the prettier and sweeter for the mist, which was not quite dew, lingering upon her eye-lashes. We supped together, and sat out on the porch until bed-time, watching the moon rise, and mount—the crystal-white light driving back the shadows from the wet grass and ribbon-like graveled paths winding away into the shrubbery; enjoying the scent-freighted air throbbing and cooling before the river breeze, and talking, talking, talking, as only two girls who have been bosom friends from infancy can talk after nearly six months' separation.

Agnes bore her part gallantly, and I quite forgot the passing cloud that had dimmed her eyes and shaken her voice.

When we were ready for bed the cloud returned and broke. I saw her kneeling form tremble from head to foot while she was saying her prayers, and heard a stifled sob.

Arising, with averted face, she went to a wardrobe on the far side of the room, took a miniature from a drawer, kissed it twice, and furtively slipped it under her pillow.

When we had lain down, and the light was out, I knew, gentle and gradual as was the movement, that she drew the picture from its hiding-place and pressed it to her bosom.

Passing my hand caressingly over her cheek, I felt that it was wet.

"Agnes!" I said, softly, "cannot I comfort you? What is it, my poor dear? Surely you are not grieving over a sorrow that will be cured so soon as will Mr. Hunt's absence?"

She clung to me in a wild storm of tears. She was but twenty, and had not had a secret from me in ten years; so I got this one.

Law business, imperative, and not to be deferred, he said, had called Harry to Bristol. With all her sweetness of temper, his wife had been a spoiled child in her father's house, and her husband had never crossed her.

She especially desired that he should be at home while I was there, and could not be convinced that the matter in hand could not be transacted as well by correspondence as in person.

From pleading she passed to remonstrance, then to indignant protest. The result was that roof of horrors to the newly-wedded—the first quarrel.

Harry told her that she was unreasonable and childish, and asked her how she expected him to make a living for herself and him if she kept him tied to her apron-string.

"And I called him unfeeling and cruel and—ruthless!" confessed the penitent, between her sobs. "I have cried myself to sleep for two nights over it. If I could but see him for one minute—long enough to beg his pardon—I could let him go again for six months, if necessary. If you had seen his face when I said that last wicked word! He turned as white as death, and bit his lips hard to keep back the bitter answer I deserved. How could I do it? How could I do it?"

It did seem inexorable to me—a slightly-priggish damsel with a well-formulated creed of wifely duty and deportment—but I lectured her mildly in consideration of her genuine distress.

"He has a generous heart," I concluded. "He will not bear a grudge, you may be sure, and his very soul is bound up in you."

The neatly-out plaster did not draw the lips of the wound together. Indeed, it bled afresh.

"He never said an unkind word to me in his life, my suffering, patient, ill-used angel! And I wouldn't walk down to the station with him, although I knew he was longing to ask me to do it. I didn't even go with him to the door, and when he kissed me good-bye, I just let him do it, and stood like a dumb block while he walked out of the house—oh, Nora! so slowly and unwillingly! It wasn't a bit like his step! I didn't stir to go to the window, where I had always stood every morning, to kiss my hand to him when he went down to the office. But I watched him from away back in the room where he couldn't see me, and saw him go down the path and stop under the honeysuckle at the gate, to look up at the window. When he didn't see me his face turned absolutely dark—the most awful thing! and he rushed off down the street with never a glance behind him. That was our first parting! We parted under a thunder-cloud, Nora! I have lived in the heart of it ever since. If you had not come I think I must have gone crazy, thinking, and living it all over!"

My sympathy quieted her somewhat, I hope, but I am afraid the battered platitudes of which, as is the case with most younglings of inexperience, I had great store, wrought more soporifically. Pausing for breath and a reply, at length, I discovered that she was asleep.

Chilled and chagrined, I laid her from my arms upon her own pillow. Something slid from her lax hand. It was her husband's miniature, glass and setting, warmed by her passionate holding. I thrust it impatiently under her pillow. The cut was not dangerous, I reflected, with judicial fastidiousness, when the patient could slumber under the surgeon's hands.

I was aroused in the morning by a shower of kisses upon my lips and eyelids. In the slow awakening from the slumbers of health and youth, I dreamed that I was walking through a vista of honeysuckles that bobbed devilishly against my face, and opened laughing eyes upon Agnes' countenance. She wore a white gown, bound at the waist with a blue sash—Harry's favourite colour; the honeysuckles were in her belt; the breath and fragrance and refreshment of the May morning were about and in her. I had overslept myself by a matter of two hours, and breakfast was ready. Agnes sat at the open window and chatted while I dressed.

"I am quite another creature to-day," she said, blithely. "You have wrought a wonderful cure upon me, Dr. Nora! I am going to follow your prescriptions; put useless regrets behind me, and behave like a rational Christian in future. I have been thinking, too, over the possibilities of Harry's getting back on Friday instead of Saturday. I feel almost sure that he will be here to-morrow. This is Thursday, you know. I can imagine how he will thank you when he hears what good advice you gave me."

Could I remind her that she had dropped asleep before I reached the "application" of my homily?

She was still chatting, when, fully dressed, I joined her at the window, and put my arm about her. A white jasmine, tacked along the window-frame, cast graceful streamers from one side to the other.

Smiling happily and roguishly Agnes pulled down a spray bearing as many five-pointed flowers as leaves, coiled it rapidly into a wreath, and laid it on my head.

"And you shall wear a starry crown!" she chanted, gaily.

I think the gate-latch clicked. I know we both looked out at the same instant.

Harry Hunt was just entering the yard.

Have I said that he was a handsome man? I had always thought so, but never believed he could be so royally beautiful as now, framed in the honeysuckled arch of the little gateway.

His face was alight with happiness and love; his eyes eagerly sought the window, and, as a low exclamation of rapture escaped the figure beside me, he smiled, tossed his hand into the air in glad greeting, and bounded quickly up the walk.

Agnes flew into the hall to meet him. I, left alone for a moment, saw him, I solemnly aver, as he set his foot upon the lower step of the porch, the flash of the May sunshine upon his blond head, uncovered in knightly reverence before his wife.

Then, a wild shriek of terrified anguish rang through every corner of the cottage. I reached Agnes as she reeled back, fainting. My arms—not her husband's—received her.

The porch was vacant; so were the path and the trellised gate-way. The radiant presence that had glorified all three an instant before had passed into thin air when the wife sought to grasp it.

Harry Hunt, as a few old Arnfield people living will remember, died suddenly—it was said of heart disease—in Bristol, at the very hour and minute in which we believed that we saw him come in at the wicket-gate.

Perhaps the Society of Psychological Research may announce the existence and define the operation of the law of mental influence which enabled the released spirit to project a simulacrum of his physical presence upon the imagination of her who loved him passionately, and longed inexpressibly for the assurance of his forgiving love.

"Heaven let him come to lift the cloud," the widow said to her dying day.

We dare not step, even with unsteady feet, upon the sacred awfulness of that ground.

His love was so mighty that he made her believe that she beheld him with her bodily eyes, say psychological savants, reverent in faith in what they cannot explain.

But what, then, was it that I saw?

DEARER THAN GOLD.

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CHAPTER XXI.

We left Nell pursuing her duties as village schoolmistress at Ashdown, quite unconscious, poor child, that her address was in the hands of the man she dreaded more than death.

It was a lovely September day, and Nell's work was over. At four o'clock on Friday school broke up, and did not reopen till Monday.

Perhaps the two days of leisure were saddest of all the week to poor little Nell. She had too much time to think; and, alas! her thoughts always flew to the fair Kentish village where Dick Granville superintended the estate that ought to have been his own.

It was a cruel grief to her that she could do nothing to restore it to him. While she lived he would never have his rights, for even had he been a man likely to accept such a thing Nell dared not, willingly, resign her claims, since to do so she must first have proclaimed her identity, and so brought down upon herself her two bitter foes.

It was hard that the girl he had saved from a sinful death should stand between him and happiness.

Nell often found herself wishing Heaven would be merciful and take her to itself, since in this world there seemed only sorrow and suffering before her.

She was wishing it this very September afternoon as she stood at the gate of Goody's cottage, gazing over the hills to where she could just see the dancing waves of the sea looking their loveliest, with the autumn sun pouring his rays full on them.

"It's a beautiful world!" thought the poor little ne'er-do-well, sadly, "but there's no place for me in it."

She had hardly come back from her sad musings when the telegraph boy, who had been leisurely crossing the green-sward, reached the gate.

"There's two shillings to pay for porterage, miss," he said, civilly. "I've brought it all the way from Deal."

And when she had given him a florin, declaring there was "no answer," he turned away and left Nell in possession of the missive so little expected or deserved.

She did not know what she hoped or feared as she tore it open. The words seemed to dance before her eyes as she read the message:—

"Dr. Doby, Dring, to Miss Winter,
'Ivy Cottage,'
Ashdown, Deal.

"My patient, Mr. Charteris, is dying, and wishes to see you before the end. I will meet the last train from Deal, reaching Victoria at 10.15. Come by it if you wish to be in time!"

It was before the days of sixpenny telegrams. Evidently the kindly physician had not grudged the extra charge, for he had far exceeded twenty words.

Nell felt a strange, dull pain at her heart. Dick was dying!—Dick, whom she had last seen in all the pride and strength of his young manhood. But a minute before she had craved death herself; and lo! the Great Angel had passed her by and claimed as victim one who could ill be spared, before whom lay much honest, noble work.

Dick was dying! A blank came before the girl's eyes. At first the thought was to her intolerable anguish. Then there came other feelings. He must have held her dear since he had wished for her in his last hours. Ah, well! it would not be a sin for her to love him when he was dead. She could never be aught to him while he lived. But now that he was dying she might tell him the truth—that she was Petronella Smith, and had never dreamed his aunt could possibly despoil him for her sake.

The news had to be broken to Goody. An

old friend—Dick seemed a very old one to Nell—was dying, and had sent for her. She should be back at latest on Sunday night. Goody must explain to the Rector; and the old nurse, being one of those rare women who never dispute with a person whom they see has made up their mind, uttered no remonstrance, but confined herself to preparing a hasty tea, and insisting on Nell's taking food before she set out on her four-mile walk to Deal.

Have you ever gone a long journey to reach one dear to you, whose life you know to be in danger? If so, you can understand Nell's feelings.

She would fain have given the wings of her own impatience to the flagging engine. Each delay was torture to her. It seemed to her more like a thousand miles instead of something under a hundred! And all the while she uttered no sigh, shed not a single tear; but she sat rigid and dry-eyed in the corner of the third-class carriage, her hands locked together, her face full of such unutterable grief, such bitter anguish, that the most careless of her fellow-travellers felt instinctively they were in the presence of a great sorrow, and did not trouble her by any attempts at conversation.

As the lights on Battersea Bridge came in sight, and she knew her torture of suspense was nearly over, Nell roused herself to wonder how she could recognise Dr. Doby in the crowd who might be on the platform. Though nominally a quick train, they had stopped at nearly all stations up to Faversham, and had brought passengers from most of the Kent coast towns, so that the train was tolerably full.

She had never heard Dr. Doby's name even till his telegram. He might be a young man, or a grey-headed veteran. How should she find him?

The only conclusion was to wait until everyone else had left the platform, trusting that the doctor would do the same, and thus discover her; but this plan was not needed. Almost the moment she descended from the train an old gentleman, with bowed form and benignant face, came up to her.

"Miss Winter, I think?"

She did not like his voice. Despite his kindness, she did not think it rang true. It was almost laboriously slow and soft, as though he thought it might lessen her grief to be spoken to in the doleful sing-song style which used to prevail in our nurseries long ago.

She did not answer him in words, but she bowed her head, and put her hand on the arm he offered for her acceptance.

"I have tickets!" he said, still in the same tone, "and the train starts at once. We have no time to lose."

Nell knew very little about the suburbs, her wanderings having been chiefly confined to London and other large towns.

She had heard Mr. Granville's mother and sister lived at Dring, and remembered he had been suddenly sent for by them the day before she decided to leave the Lyles. Probably he had never returned to Field Royal.

From his remarks she had fancied Dring was a good thirty miles from London on the Birmingham line, but the tickets in the doctor's hands were only for Willesden, and he was hurrying her along the subway to the District Railway.

He paused for one moment at the refreshment-room, discovered they had still ten minutes to spare, and departed for a glass of wine, which he assured Nell would do her good.

She swallowed it reluctantly when it came, more to save any discussion than because she cared for it.

Then they went down the steps, and reached the platform just as the porters proclaimed the arrival of the train.

It was a relief to Nell that the doctor seemed as silent as herself. He placed her in a comfortable seat—first class, of course—pulled the curtains so as to screen her from any draught, and then buried himself in a newspaper, in which he seemed as much engrossed as though his patient, Mr. Granville, were not hovering between life and death.

"I thought Dene was much further?" said Nell, when the train stopped at Willeaden, and her companion prepared to alight.

"So it is; but this train branches off here, and we must drive the rest of the way."

It was half-past eleven; Nell noticed the time as they passed the railway clock. Was that why she felt so very, very tired?—why, in spite of that awful fear at her heart, the terrible grief she knew was coming on her, she yet felt so conscious of fatigue?

A fly was waiting. Evidently Dr. Doby had engaged it beforehand, for the man drove up directly he espied them.

The doctor said something to him, of which Nell only caught the last words. "Drive as fast as possible. Every minute is of consequence to me to-night."

It was kind of him to be so thoughtful, considerate of him to let her know all possible haste was being made, and yet—first impressions are strange things—Helen Winter did not like the benevolent practitioner. She accused herself of ingratitude. Weary as she was she tried to discover what had caused her prejudice; but she found she could not think a reason clearly. She was so very tired; it took all her efforts to prevent her eyes closing. She was perfectly conscious of Dick's danger, and that she was hastening to him, and yet she could not conquer the terrible physical fatigue which was creeping over her.

The drive was really under five miles; but it seemed much longer, for the roads were bad—often, indeed, being so new and neglected that this was the first carriage that had passed up them.

The man did his best, and they rumbled on somehow; but it was past midnight when his pace relaxed, and Nell felt they had gained their haven.

"Is Mrs. Granville here?" asked Nell, a little timidly. Alas! girls too often have to fear the mother of the man they love, since it seems an unwritten law with these matrons that the one unpardonable sin in younger women is to be their son's wife or betrothed.

"No."

He did not add another word, but led Nell up a long, dreary front court to an open door, a flood of light from the hall almost blinding the poor child after the semi-darkness of the fly. A woman stood there—a nice motherly sort of creature, with a black gown and neat, white apron such as hospital attendants wear. Nell's heart went out to her at once.

"Are you the nurse?" she asked eagerly.

"Oh! tell me! is he alive? Are we in time?"

The doctor and the woman exchanged glances. His seemed to say, "I told you so," but hers was altogether different, pitying and kind, while almost tender was the way in which she put one arm round Nell and led her into the front parlour.

"You're just tired out, my dear!" she said, as she began to unfasten Nell's wraps. "You'll feel a deal better when you have had a good night's rest."

"I cannot rest until I have seen him!" cried Nell, excitedly. "You look kind; oh! take me to him at once. You know he wants me; that is why I have come here. He sent for me!"

"Poor child!" said the nurse, pityingly. "It is too late! You can never see him in life again, my poor lamb!"

It was too much, coming as it did after all the terrible suspense and anxiety she had undergone. Nell rose to her feet, and tried to walk to the door, but she staggered at the first step, and would have fallen had not the nurse caught her in her arms and laid her on the sofa.

"I'd better get her to bed, doctor," she said simply, "and maybe you'd like to stay here for the night. The master's not in, nor Mr. Smith either. They both thought it would be quieter for her if you brought her while there was no one here but me, but you'd be kindly welcome to a bed."

Dr. Doby could have told her he knew Mr. "Smith" would never be anywhere at the

same time as himself, since they were one and the same person, but he only looked at Nell, and sighed profoundly.

"It's the saddest case I ever heard of; husband and father devoted to her, and yet there's no chance of her ever being cured!"

"What is it—mania?"

"Hardly that. She'll never have to be shut up in an asylum, poor creature. It's more like melancholia. Her husband met with an accident, and they told her too suddenly, let her rush off on a long journey to the place where he was, not knowing whether she should find him alive or dead. He was in the American army then, and as fine an officer as you ever saw."

"But he recovered," said the nurse quietly, "so that I don't see why the shock of his accident should have upturned his wife's mind!"

"He recovered, but the friend at his side was struck down dead. At the place no one had ever seen poor Mrs. Norton, and they took her for the daughter of the dead man, and told her she had come too late. It threw her into a nervous fever, and since that time, just eighteen months ago, she has been as you see her now. To her mind she is always travelling to see her husband, and always arriving just too late."

"I should have thought the sight of Mr. Norton would have been the best cure for such a delusion!" suggested the nurse.

Dr. Doby looked at her a little sternly. He was thinking if the nurse had ideas of her own, and theories about her patient different from what she was told, she might prove a very tiresome customer.

"She hates the sight of him!" he said, shortly, "actually takes him for a cruel enemy, from whom she is trying to escape. Well, nurse, I must be off. No doubt your master and Mr. Norton will be home to-morrow."

"And you will come and see Mrs. Norton in a few days, sir?"

"Certainly, unless her husband prefers other advice; but it is a case, unfortunately, where medical skill can do very little. Everything depends on care and good nursing, Mrs. Carter, I assure you."

"She shall have both, sir!" and the earnest way in which the woman spoke made "Dr. Doby" feel decidedly afraid they had made a mistake in engaging Mrs. Carter's services.

The plot was cruel and treacherous, but it had been skillfully laid, and seemed likely to succeed, since it was two men of the world—unscrupulous, crafty, and revengeful—against a girl, friendless, undefended, and alone.

James Smith—it was his real name, although he had borne more aliases than he cared to remember—had once been the friend and confidante of Sir Jocelyn Lyle.

How two men so utterly dissimilar could ever have been allies seems incredible; but in his youth the Baronet had two foibles the other knew how to use to his own advantage. He hated trouble, and he was fond of flattery.

Working on these two points James Smith contrived to make himself indispensable to Sir Jocelyn, and enjoyed a great deal of his confidence down to the time of his marriage.

It was he who contrived to blight the marriage that might have been so happy. He poisoned the husband's mind by suggesting his young wife had jilted the clergyman for a richer man, not for one she loved better.

He strove to make Petronella hurt and indignant at this suspicion. She had scorned Mr. Smith in the first flush of her happiness, and he determined to make her pay for it.

He caused his attentions to her to be commented on. Sir Jocelyn, furious, forbade him the house.

The proud, passionate girl who, though she cared not a straw for the handsome adventurer, was indignant at her husband's doubting her, grew reckless, and flirted with Mr. Smith whenever she met him.

A terrible scene took place, and she left her husband. He believed firmly she had forsaken him for another.

Smith took good care not to disabuse him of the idea, and all the time the poor ill-fated creature was pining away in a London lodging, preserving her life solely for the sake of the little child who came to her five months after she left her husband—her daughter and his.

It was James Smith, who, desperately "down on his luck," wrote the letter to Sir Jocelyn, describing Petronella as dying of hardship and privation, and pleading for his pardon and a last sight of his face.

Knowing the Baronet's character perfectly he was certain he would refuse the visit, but open his purse liberally.

He regretted afterwards he had sent the news of Lady Lyle's death to her husband, since all further applications in her name were thus impossible, but he never troubled himself what had become of the beautiful woman whose happiness he had wrecked.

He met her again by accident when her little daughter was three years old—poor, worn, and sad, but beautiful as ever; and he forthwith resolved that such a companion would materially assist him in his battle with the world.

He threatened, if she refused him, to tell the truth to Sir Jocelyn, and thus blight his home a second time.

He argued to Petronella that her husband had married again and forgotten her. If she appeared the marriage would be illegal. He even declared his intention of levying black mail on the Baronet for keeping his secret; and so Petronella, being hardly beset, yielded, or rather suggested a compromise.

She would be married to James Smith, and bear his name. She would share his fortunes and do her utmost for their success, but she would be no more to him than a stranger.

If she lived in his house for years their hands should never meet, his lips never touch her face.

He agreed, because he thought she would be useful to him, also he knew he was in danger of penal servitude if Sir Jocelyn learned the fraud practised on him, and chose to prosecute.

These two were linked together by a double secret. The poor, hapless creature who had once been Lady Lyle could not bear that her husband's home should be wrecked a second time.

She was content to sacrifice herself—that he might continue to think her dead—while James Smith not only gained the certainty Sir Jocelyn would not learn his fraud by keeping Petronella under his eye, but she doing so gave him what men of his cruel, heartless nature most desire—a victim who could never escape.

Taunts, cruel words, neglect, privation, even blows—she bore them all without complaint.

Her young daughter mistook this marvellous patient endurance for affection. It was nothing less, only the affection was for Sir Jocelyn Lyle.

Petronella bore her sufferings for his sake. She could put up with anything so long as he did not know the truth that her wretched life still lingered; and thus his gentle, yielding bride, who slept in Ravensmere churchyard, had never been his wife, and her daughter could never be his heiress.

When death came she knew Sir Jocelyn's future was safe. She carried her secret with her to the grave. James Smith might have risked danger for himself by betraying it if she had left him. Her death sealed his lips. He could not prove the poor faded wreck he had made so wretched had ever been Petronella Lyle. All was safe when once her life was ended.

And her child, the one being who loved her, even for her poor sinner's affection was less than that she bore her husband. She loved "Nell" dearly, but even for Nell's sake she could not disturb Sir Jocelyn's peace. She knew her child was fair of face, and she entreated her, as soon as she found someone she could love and who would marry her, to become an honoured wife.

She begged her to be "good" to her "father," and to bear with him, because she dreaded at any moment he might pour out the story of her past to Nell, and she could not bear for her child to think harshly of her.

She had no friends to whom to leave her child. The old "cousin" at Cromer lived a simple, primitive life, and had never heard the story of Petronella's youth. She was kind and motherly, but she lived in a little country place where, perhaps, gossip was rife, and people would be curious over Nell's history.

The mother never knew the child's "rights." She had been so very young when she married that Sir Jocelyn had never spoken to her much of his property, and the conditions on which he held it. She thought, poor mother, either he could leave it by will to whom he pleased, in which case the children of his second marriage would have all, or that it was entailed, and would pass to Nell's half-brother, for she did not even know an son had been born of the second marriage.

Fabian Lyle was an "adventurer." If he succeeded his brother he would spend all Ravensmere was a fine estate; but the woman Sir Jocelyn had called mercenary never speculated as to whether she could secure some of it for her child.

She was always glad—then the very first—that her baby was a girl. If it had been a son she must have sent word to her husband. As things were, a girl could not affect his fortunes; the son of his second marriage, or his brother, would be his natural heir. Little Nell belonged only to her mother.

When the woman he had so wronged died, James Smith felt something very like regret; but it did not last, and it made him not one wit kinder to her child. He hated Petronella just as long ago he had hated Jocelyn Lyle.

He kept her with him for two reasons. She was beautiful, and therefore likely to marry well, and he meant to make a fortune later on by trading on the secret of her birth. He was unlike his dead victim. He had studied the entail on the Lyle property carefully, and he knew that Sir Jocelyn's second wife had had but one child—a girl. Her mother dead, James Smith was free from all fear of his old fraud being discovered. He could, indeed, pass as a generous benefactor, and confront the Barones with Petronella, saying,—

"Here is your child whom you deserted, and I have brought up as my own, despite my poverty!"

His proofs were quite ready. Lady Lyle had gone straight to a London lodging, and remained there till her child was born. The baby's birth was registered in its true name, though the mother was known as the lodgings as Mrs. Clare. She had subsequently gone to humbler ones, which she left to share James Smith's fortunes; but the landlady of the first house could prove that he never came near during the year Mrs. Clare had lived with her. All was ready to hand, therefore, to prove Petronella's rights as Sir Jocelyn's eldest daughter; and as it would not be needful to allude to Mrs. Clare's career after she left her first abode, the legality of Sir Jocelyn's second marriage and of Dulcie's birth could never be questioned. If James Smith had gone to Sir Jocelyn with his story on Petronella's death, no shame, no disgrace, would have arisen.

Dulcie would simply have been in the position of a younger child, but then, on the other hand, James Smith might not have received any reward. If he waited until Dulcie was actually in possession of Ravensmere and carried his story to her and her husband, they would have to come down pretty handsomely.

Mr. Smith's schemes were a little disturbed by George Norton's insisting on Nell's hand as the price of his silence as to some disgraceful act of his "friend." But then, Mr. Smith reflected, he did not know the girl's claims, and so could not go in for the game on his own account.

Nell escaped them, and both sought her eagerly, though absence in Canada for a few

months caused the husband to leave the search chiefly to the father. But for Dick's advertisement they must have found her at Hastings. They discovered her identity with Mrs. Charteris's companion the moment Mr. Cameron began to search for her, because the name of Petronella was so unusual they guessed it must be she.

To find her became more needful than ever when they knew all her little hand could bring with it; and being people who stood at very little they decided if they could not produce the real Petronella they would find someone to act the part when once they were convinced none of the Charteris's family had known her intimately.

George Norton had another difficulty in the way, but after he and his father-in-law had spent a few weeks at The Laurels, picking up information, he thought things were promising enough to persevere in the plot, and so shipped his difficulty off to Canada.

Unluckily for the conspirators Nell left Ravensmere (they found out she was there by a strange chance), and disappeared so completely they had to return to their former plan of putting forward a false heiress.

Mr. Norton's half-sister, an actress of more beauty than talent, so far resembled Nell that a general description would apply equally to both.

For a certain consideration she was pressed into the service, and held herself ready to take action when instructed.

Lady Dale's malice, however, gave the real Petronella once more into the power of her foes. Careful inquiry in the neighbourhood when he went down and found her flown had told George Norton that Dick Granville admired—to put it mildly—his wife, so the telegram was concocted which should lure her away from her cottage home.

The lonely house, the charwoman he had known some time were both engaged with consummate skill. The impersonation of Dr. Doby was splendid, but the weak point in the case was Mrs. Carter.

Mr. Norton's charwoman had point-blank refused to be left in charge of "a mad lady," and threatened to throw up her post entirely if asked to wait on one. She had a cousin used to nursing, who wasn't afraid of anything. Seeing she was out of a job just now her charges wouldn't be high. Anyway, she wouldn't stay by herself with a mad lady, as sure as her name was Mumps.

The time was so short, the need for retaining Mrs. Mumps so urgent, that the two gentlemen gave way. She was permitted to engage her cousin, whom she termed "a civil body enough, though dreadful silent, but a good worker, and as honest as the day."

It would have been better for the success of George Norton's plan had he never yielded, for Mary Carter deserved every word of her cousin's praises, and it was well for poor Petronella that hers was the care secured for her at Egerton-terrace.

CHAPTER XXII.

Of course it was quite impossible that the arrival of Mrs. George Norton at Field Royal could be kept a secret. It was all very well for Dick Granville and Lord Dale to declare to each other they must temporise with her until they discovered her husband's address. They had a very acute young woman to deal with, and, without counting the opinions of the neighbourhood, they had to reckon with the supposed heiress herself.

"Is it friends or foes?" she asked, briskly, when she met them at breakfast the next day.

"Friends, I hope," replied Dick, gravely. "As I have repeatedly told Mr. Cameron, I desire nothing more than that my aunt's property should pass to her chosen heir. The moment you have seen our family lawyer, and he acknowledges your identity, Mrs. Norton, you shall take your place as mistress here."

"He's sure to raise a heap of objections,"

she said, lightly; "but I suppose you must have your own way. When will he condescend to come here?"

"He is out of town now, and not expected back till November," said Mr. Granville. "Perhaps you would rather return to your husband in the interval?"

"I shall stay here, unless you turn me out!" was the young lady's rejoinder.

Dick flushed with shame for her that she should elect to spend two weeks almost *à tête-à-tête* with himself, but he had no fancy for Mrs. Norton's society.

"In that case I will go over to Ravensmere, and ask Sir Jocelyn and Mrs. Lyle to take pity on me," he said, carelessly. "I can ride over and transact my business here. I fear you will find it very dull alone."

"You see," he explained to Lord Dale, later on, as they drove over to see Sir Jocelyn, "the plate and jewels are at the bank. There are many valuables left at Field Royal, but hardly of a portable nature. Even if this lady proves as light-fingered as my poor mother's boarders, she could hardly decamp with the grand piano or the family pictures!"

"What is her object, I wonder?"

"She is got up to resemble Nell—Miss Winter, I mean. Did you not notice her hair is exactly the same shade, and she wears it dressed exactly in the same manner? Then she is just the poor girl's height. Depend upon it, Lennox, if Cameron had not been particularly interested in my aunt's companion he would be deceived."

"There is not a shade of resemblance!"

"No; but there is the same figure and complexion, and depend upon it she will keep her veil down throughout the interview. She makes a blunder by supposing Cameron her enemy, whereas he was particularly kind to the real heiress!"

"Perhaps you think he'll be taken in?"

Dick shook his head.

"Not a bit of it!"

Sir Jocelyn still led a sofa life, but the friends were ushered into the library, and he listened with much interest to their story; only when Dick told him his conviction that Dulcie's late companion was the missing heiress, Petronella Smith, he started.

"That would explain the resemblance," he said, speaking almost as though to himself. "But no—it is impossible, absurd!" Then in another tone, "you never told me Miss Smith's name was Petronella."

"Did I not? You see it is rather lengthy, and I usually spoke of her as Miss Smith. I remember now, when I first met Miss Winter, she told me she had a strange, old-fashioned name, but that her mother always called her Nell."

Lord Dale took leave, but Dick, who had been warmly invited to make Ravensmere his home until Mrs. George Norton vacated Field Royal, sat on, talking to his host; but he soon perceived it was only a half-hearted attention he received.

"Are you in pain?" he asked, kindly. "Do I bore you?"

A wistful smile crossed the Baronet's face.

"You never bore me, Dick. I think I am as fond of you as though you had been my son! It is only old memories that have awoke to trouble me. My wife was called Petronella, and I have never heard the name since she left me."

"I thought she was called Lucy!"

"Dulcie's mother—yes! I meant my first wife. I don't wonder you look surprised, Dick. It is a miserable story. She—left me before we had been married a year, and just a few months later she died. It was a private marriage, and very few of my friends know that the romance of my life was ended before ever I met my child's mother!"

"I wish I had known it, and not troubled you by speaking a name which, even now, must have a painful ring in your ears."

"I am glad you spoke, Dick, are you certain Miss Winter is"—he spoke the last words with an effort—"Petronella Smith?"



'DULCIE LYLE WAS RECLINING ON A SOFA, LADY DALE KNEELING BY HER SIDE, WHEN DICK ENTERED!'

Dick bowed his head.
"I have no proof, sir, but I feel it is so. It explains much that baffled me!"

Sir Jocelyn closed his eyes and seemed lost in deep thought, then he opened them, and said, slowly,—

"There is a terrible doubt upon me, Dick! I know that I can trust you, but before I give you my confidence promise me one thing—that you will tell me your true opinion. Don't try to soften it, don't try to gloss it over; let me know what you really think, as man to man!"

Dick took the wasted hand in his.

"I promise," he said, solemnly.

"Listen! That girl—Nell Winter, I will not give her the other name—is the image of my lost wife. The resemblance is so startling that I fainted when I first saw her. It seemed to me then that the grave had given up its dead."

"I remember," said Dick. "I was here when she came."

"She resembles my first wife more closely than many daughters do their mothers. Then, too, she has many traits of the Lyles. She plays and sings like an *artiste*. Music is almost an inheritance in our family. She seemed almost to anticipate my every wish. She gave me such daughterly care and attention as my own child would never think of offering me. She was at Ravensmere less than three months, yet when she left I missed her as I have never missed Dulcie! What does it mean?"

"I should say that her mother and your first wife were nearly related," said Dick, thoughtfully. "Sisters, perhaps, and that Nell took after her aunt."

"She was called after her mother," persisted Sir Jocelyn. "She told me so herself, and now you say her name is Petronella! Don't trifle with me, Dick!"

"My dear Sir Jocelyn, I would not do so for the world. You said just now a terrible

doubt assailed you. What is it? Once again I promise you can trust me."

"I thought you would have guessed. I think she is my daughter."

Dick stared.

"How could she be?"

"Such things have been before," said his companion, gloomily. "A very few months after my wife left me—perhaps six, certainly not more—she died. Don't you see her life may have ended when this child's began. She was so proud she would have preferred anything to asking aught of me."

He quite forgot then the application that had been made to him in his wife's name.

"It is impossible," said Dick Granville, warmly. "No woman in the world would leave her infant in poverty if by appeal of hers she could find it a father's home!"

Sir Jocelyn persisted.

"You have not heard all. I have one bitter enemy—a man who wronged me and my wife cruelly. His name was Smith. Dick, don't you see my idea? This villain, he was nothing less, may have stolen my child and bred her up in poverty to inflict a stab on me."

"It is hardly likely." He would not tell Sir Jocelyn what he had heard of Nell's mother and her broken heart. He felt the man he had seen at Hastings was capable of anything, but he would not say so.

"It must be sifted, Dick," said Sir Jocelyn, anxiously. "I shall have no peace until the mystery is solved. Why, don't you see the difference it would make? Dulcie could not touch a penny of my property if she had an elder sister."

"Where is Dulcie?" asked Dick, who had been requested to speak of the young lady thus familiarly. "I have not seen her for a long time."

"At Dalesham House, I expect. She is always running off there when she can escape her aunt's vigilance. I cannot understand the attraction Lady Dale has for her."

"Nor I," agreed Dick, heartily. "That is a lady I should never presume to be intimate with."

They lunched without Dulcie. Mrs. Lyle looked troubled when the afternoon wore on, and she did not return.

But when five o'clock came, and no Dulcie, the alarm of Sir Jocelyn and his sister-in-law was so evident that Dick good-naturedly offered to drive over to Dalesham House and bring back the truant.

It was past six when he drove through the lodge-gates of Dalesham House. He threw the reins to his groom (or rather Sir Jocelyn's) and pealed the bell of the grand entrance. The butler declared Miss Lyle was with Lady Dale and could not possibly be disturbed.

"I will take all the blame of the intrusion," said Dick, civilly. "I must see Miss Lyle. I have a message from her father."

The dusky page appeared, and led the way to the room we have seen before. He signed to Dick to enter by himself, and Mr. Granville did so.

At first sight he could distinguish nothing. Then as his eyes grew used to the dim light of the silver lamp he knew that Dulcie Lyle was reclining on a sofa, and Lady Dale, kneeling by her, was singing a kind of dreary dirge in some strange, unknown tongue. She started to her feet at the sight of Dick.

"Dulcie is asleep," she said, graciously. "I have been charming away her headache."

The room was faint with the perfume of many Eastern scents. Dick felt that the headache Dulcie had lost was attacking him. Then he looked at Lady Dale, and something in her eyes told him the truth.

There was something strange about her besides her foreign ways and her belief in witchcraft. The strange, weird light in her beautiful eyes told Dick the truth which neither friend or foe had guessed before—Zoë was mad!

(To be continued.)



[WITH A LOW CRY PHILIPPA FALLS BACK AGAINST THE WALL WITH A HORROR-STRIKEN FACE!]

NOVELETTE.]

PHILIPPA'S FATHER.

—O—

CHAPTER I.

"WELL, Philippa, I have let the rooms at last!" says Mrs. Hurst, looking up from her work.

"Oh, I am glad!" the girl answers, untying her bonnet. "I have been worrying all day about the rent. I really did not see how we were to pay it; and to-night Mr. Denman told me I must take a week's holiday, as business is so very slack."

"Oh, Phil! It seems to me we are never to have any good luck any more. What are you to do about your dress? You are really quite shabby on Sundays!"

Phil suppresses a sigh, and says quite cheerfully,—

"Never mind, mother dear! I can wait a little longer, and I am so glad to think we have got the cloth for the boys' suits! Just think how nice it will be to have them finished so quickly! 'Tis an ill wind that blows no one any good!"

"But the money, Phil! We can ill spare that!" Mrs. Hurst says, fretfully.

"We shall manage very well, dear! You forget the lodger! By the way, what sort of creature is he? Or is it a maiden lady, with her attendant cat and parrot?"

"It is a gentleman; he is dark, I believe. He tells me, too, he is Lord Sourby's new secretary. He seemed pleasant, but I daresay we shall find him the reverse."

"Now, mother, you must not look on the dark side!"

"How can I help it? Have I not had enough to render me hopeless?" says the little woman, bitterly.

The girl goes forward rapidly, and laying

her slim, white, helpful hands on her mother's shoulders, says,—

"Mother, mother! for our sakes keep a brave heart! What should we do without you?"

The poor harassed mother kisses the sweet, young face.

"Ah, Phil! you would be better without me. Since your father went away I am a changed woman. I have no hope, no energy. I often wonder I do not wear out your patience and your love!"

"You can never do that!" earnestly; and then in a lighter tone: "Now, mother, if you will give me the cloth and the patterns I will begin cutting out."

"Not to-night. I am sure you are tired, and to-morrow will be time enough!"

"No time like the present; and if I cut the suits out to-night I can start making them to-morrow."

"It will be a poor sort of holiday for you," says Mrs. Hurst, producing all necessary articles, even to a pair of huge scissors.

"A change of occupation is as good as a rest. Now, mother, sit down and see in what a scientific way I shall go to work!" and, laughing, the girl spreads the cloth upon the table, and begins to make all sorts of queer measurements.

And just when she is most intent upon the task before her a light knock sounds at the door, and the next moment a dark face appears in the aperture.

"Mrs. Hurst," says a clear, high-bred voice, "may I take my coffee here—it is so horribly lonely upstairs?"

The poor little woman looks round hurriedly—the room is so untidy. But Philippa says quite calmly,—

"Come in, if you please, and pray, excuse the pervading air of 'muddle.' This sort of work cannot be done without it."

The stranger, casting a swift, half-surprised glance at the sweet, dark face, the sweet figure, enters.

"I hope I do not intrude?" he says courteously.

And Mrs. Hurst answers, with a shade less of fretfulness in her voice.—

"Oh, no; but I am wondering where I am to place you."

With a quick movement Philippa clears a tiny table, and, bringing it towards the fire, places a chair beside it.

"If you are not comfortable, please say so," then goes on with her work as calmly as though the lodger does not exist.

"If it is not inquisitive," he says, as he watches her deft fingers, "I would like to know what you are doing?"

"Cutting out suits for my brothers—the twins. Please don't criticise severely, as I am the veriest novice at this sort of thing."

"And how old are the twins? And are there any more members of the family for me to discover?"

"Wally and Dick are seven; Robin is thirteen, although he looks much younger." "There is a great gap between Robin and I! I am nineteen."

"You hardly look it!" gallantly. "Mrs. Hurst, you must find your daughter of great assistance to you in all household matters."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Muir, she is away from home all day. Misfortunes have compelled me to send her into business, although I hoped once that she might have followed some profession. But it is too vain to hope."

"The professions are overcrowded now, madam," says Mr. Muir, with emphasis. "Probably Miss Hurst is happier in her present position than she would be elsewhere. But it is hard, very hard, to be left a widow, with a young family to provide for."

His landlady flushes crimson, the girl drops her scissors with a clattering noise, and to his horror he sees such a look of angry leap into the brown eyes that he hates himself for his inadvertence; but before he can speak, Phil says,—

"You must forgive us, Mr. Muir. We cannot yet speak of his—his loss without some show of emotion. No, do not apologise," and sweeping her work aside she seats herself close by the poor jaded mother.

"There is a piano in my room," remarks the young man, anxious to speak on indifferent topics. "Do you play, Miss Hurst? I regret to say I am a wretched performer, although I can sing. (they tell me), fairly well."

"Philippa is quite a clever pianist," Mrs. Hurst murmurs, "and when it was necessary for her to work I advised her to teach music; but she refused."

"Because pupils are so uncertain, mother, and I have less anxiety in my present state."

"Doubtless," assents the lodger; "but Miss Hurst, if you are inclined to use the instrument in question pray do. I will not intrude upon you."

"You are very kind!" gently, "and I shall not forget. Mother, that is Robin's step outside," and running out, she quickly returns with a small, slight boy, whose hollow cheeks and too bright eyes speak only too plainly of the disease which will one day snatch him from their midst.

"This is Robin," the girl says, thrusting him a little forward. "We are very proud of him, because he is the genius of the family. One day, when he is grown a man, he is going to make our fortunes. Is it not so, Robin?" and she draws the lad down beside her with a gesture that is almost maternal in its tenderness. "What kept you out so late, my dear?"

"Oh! I stayed at Arthur Hazeldean's, looking at some butterfies and things, and I did not believe it could be so late as I found it was. I so enjoyed myself!"

"That is boy-like," says Mrs. Hurst. "I never knew a child-yet who had any thoughts for the poor anxious mother at home."

Mr. Muir throws himself into the breach at once.

"If you are fond of butterflies and things," he says laughing, "you need not seek them abroad. I shall be happy to show you my collection if you will come upstairs to-morrow about six. We can have tea together."

And Philippa's eloquent eyes thank him for his kindness to her favourite brother.

"I should like it very much, if I am not in the way," Robin answers, shyly. "The evenings are so long, and mother does not like me to be out after dark; it makes my cough so bad."

So it is arranged that the boy shall tea with Mr. Muir the following day, and the latter goes up to his own room, fearful of out-staying his welcome.

All that next day Phil works industriously at the "boys' clothes," and no word of complaints falls from her lips, although Mrs. Hurst is unusually trying and fretful; and a little after five she prepares tea, then gets Robin ready for his visit, watching him as he goes upstairs with loving, anxious eyes. As she stands in the little hall a young man enters without ceremony, and seeing her there, cries eagerly,—

"Phil, did you come out to meet me? Did you expect me, dear?"

"No," to both questions she answers, coldly, and returns to the room, he following. Mrs. Hurst makes room for him beside her, welcoming him cordially; but Phil sits apart, her face somewhat flushed, her eyes turned persistently away from him.

"It is unusual to find you at home at such an early hour," he says, timidly.

"Oh, Philippa has a week's holiday," the mother answers for her. "Business is so dull just now, and really the rest will be good for her, Gordon."

"Do you call it resting when she is busy about the house all day?" questions he. "Phil, put down that everlasting work, and talk to us, please."

She looks at him a moment with just a touch of disdain in her eyes.

"You would not ask me to be idle if you

knew how badly the twins want clothes, Mr. Chase, and I can always talk and think better when my hands are occupied!"

"I wish you would sometimes think of yourself instead of spending all your life on others," he says, almost pettishly, and with a vexed look on his fair face, which would be handsome but for a certain weakness about the mouth and chin. "Mrs. Hurst, you really should use your authority to prevent such a state of things!"

"What can I do?" half tearfully. "Phil is so very willful; and then, too, if we would live we must work."

"There is a way—" begins Gordon; but with a passionate gesture the girl stays his words.

"Hush, I will not hear you! How dare you so persecute me with your unwelcome attentions, winning my mother to your way of thinking, trying to bribe me into marriage with you? I am not afraid of work, and I would die rather than marry without love!"

"Philippa! Philippa! your pride and passion will be your ruin!" means Mrs. Hurst; "and it is selfish to consider your own feelings only. Gordon loves you, and would make you happy, would give you back the comfort and luxuries you must miss so sorely. Why won't you listen to him?"

The girl rises. Her face is very white now, and her mouth is mutinous.

"Would you have married my father unless you loved him? Would you wish me to spoil my life by linking it with his?" (pointing to Gordon). "Don't you know how every true woman despises weakness? And kind as I know he is, generous as he has proved himself, I cannot consent to do this thing!"

The young man is as white as Phil now, and his under-lip quivers ominously.

"Kind to all others," he says, chokingly; "you are cruel to me, and yet I love you!"

It seems so ludicrous to Philippa, this "making love" before a third party, that she can scarcely refrain from laughter; but she manages to say, gravely,—

"I do not wish to encourage any hopes you may entertain. I do not wish to behave badly to you. You have called me a coquette, and I do not deserve the name. I never gave you any ground to believe I liked you, and I hold myself clear of all blame," with which she sweeps her work together and goes out, leaving Mrs. Hurst in tears and Gordon Chase in sorely a better condition.

"I shall never win her," he says, moodily.

"I believe she hates me."

"You should be firmer with her. Philippa is so masterful, and despises any man who will let himself be treated as she treats you."

"How can I help myself? I love her, and I am a perfect slave to her. I could not be different if I tried."

"It is a great pity; but all the talking in the world will not alter it," sighs Mrs. Hurst.

"Often I do not understand her myself. She is so gentle in most things, so hard to move when once she is resolved upon anything. Then, too, she is not a girl to be easily won."

"That's it," cries Gordon, hopefully. "She knows her own value, and intends that I should do the same. I shall not despair yet; and I have no rival."

"None. But I do not think I would see her any more to-night. Try what absence will do. Perhaps if you stayed away a few days—"

"I will try, although you can't tell how hard I shall find it to hold out," and as if eager to put his new plans into execution he takes up his hat. "You will make my adieu for me, Mrs. Hurst? Good-night, and do not let her forget me."

Then he is gone, and Phil, hearing the door close behind him, comes slowly down from her attic; but as she is passing Mr. Muir's room the door opens, and Robin appears.

"Oh, Phil, it is you. I was just coming down for you. Mr. Muir wants to know if you will play us some of your best pieces.

Don't say no; the work can wait until to-morrow."

Perhaps she cannot refuse her favourite's request, perhaps she is a little tired of the endless round of duties and the fretful complaints of her mother. However that may be, she does not require much persuasion, and follows Robin into the dainty, cosy room, furnished with relics of their better days.

Dallas Muir rises to greet her, looking very proud and high-bred, very resolute and kindly.

"This is kind," he says, in his pleasant voice. "Robin and I have already exhausted our stock of amusements, and if you would play to us we should be glad!"

"You told me you sang," she answers, struggling with her shyness. "Will you not do so now?" and her busy fingers turn the music until she comes to "My Queen."

"I'll sing this," he says, and Phil thinks she has never heard the simple ballad to perfection before, and all night long these words haunt her:

"But she must be courteous, she must be holy,
Pure in her spirit the maiden I love;
Whether her birth be noble or lowly
I care no more than the spirit above.
And I'll give myself to my lady's keeping,
And ever her strength on mine shall lean,
And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping,
If I come to love her, my Queen, my Queen!"

CHAPTER II.

"Robin, who is that fair fellow I see here so often?"

"Oh! Gordon Chase; he's a great swell. His father has large printing works."

"I thought perhaps," says Dallas, "he was a relative."

"No; but if I tell you something you must not let Philippa know. He wants to marry her, but she says she cannot leave us, and she doesn't care a fig for him!"

"Oh!" and as spoken by Dallas the monosyllable is very significant.

"He isn't a bad sort," Robin goes on in a condescending way, "but he isn't good enough for Philippa; and I don't know what we should do without her. She is the best sister ever a boy had, and she never grumbles, however hard she has to work."

"You are very proud and fond of her?"

"Rather! Oh! I wish I were rich. She shouldn't have to go without pretty gowns, and all those things girls like. It's too rough on Phil; she spends her money on us, and never thinks of herself, and now she has got this holiday she will have to wait longer before she can get a new frock, and she's quite shabby. Poor, dear old Phil," and as the boy rises Dallas rises too. They have been often together during this past week, and the young man has learned many an item of the family history from Robin's innocent chatter. Now he says, "If you are going out I will go too, it will be pleasanter for both. But perhaps Mrs. Hurst will object to the arrangement; it is so very damp."

"I must go," Robin says decisively. "Don't you know to-morrow is St. Valentine's Day, and the shops are full of things. I've saved a shilling, because I don't mean Phil to go without a valentine!"

"Oh! and what shall you buy? One of those pretty paper things?"

"No!" with deep scorn. "Of what use are they? I'm going to get her a crimson neck ribbon; she looks so pretty with a bit of colour on her black dress. Don't you think she is pretty?"

"Indeed I do; and how shall you convey your gift to her? By hand?"

"Oh, no! It wouldn't be half the fun if I did. I shall post it, and get one of the girls at the shop to direct it for me, then she'll never guess who sent it."

So, Mrs. Hurst not objecting, they go out together, and after a long and exhaustive

something of the gay shop windows Robin finally decides on an establishment where fancy drapery is principally displayed. Dallas washes outside for the boy, and, as he paces to and fro, an unusually thoughtful look settles on his fine, strong face. He thinks of Philippa pitifully; her brave struggles with poverty, her patience with her poor, weak mother; her ill-paid toil, and finally of her disappointment concerning her new gown. Then all of a sudden he flashes deeply, and his eyes brighten.

"By jove! she shall have it, poor little girl," he says to himself, "It will give me as much pleasure to see her wear it as though I had come into a small fortune!"

"Mr. Muir," says Robin's voice at his elbow, "I have spoken twice, and you did not hear me!"

"I am very sorry, Robin, but I have just remembered some important business to which I must attend at once. Shall you mind going home alone? And have you got your valentine?"

"Oh! I'm not afraid, and I've got the jolliest piece of ribbon you ever saw! There was more than I had money to pay for, but it was a remnant, and the man let me have it for a shilling! It is velvet one side and satin the other. Phil will be pleased. But Mr. Muir, if you've business to do I ought not keep you, so I'll run off and post this at once. Good-night, sir," and so Robin turns away, and just for a moment Dallas stands irresolute.

He has the usual masculine horror of entering a drapery shop, but he will not allow it to conquer him. Phil shall have her dress. But now arises the question, what colour and material shall he purchase? Then he remembers that in the discharge of her duties she may wear nothing but black, and as the Sunday gown must eventually come in for daily wear, he decides on black.

Summoning up an air of ease he enters a large, well-lit shop, and an assistant coming forward, he begs to be shown some dress materials suitable for—*for quite a girl.*

"I have been commissioned," he says mendaciously, "to purchase a dress for a young lady. It must be good, and it must be black. As I am quite a novice in such matters, perhaps you will kindly assist me in my choice?"

"I shall be delighted, sir. Is it for evening wear? If so, I should recommend silk; satin is too old."

"I think it is for general use, and silk would be scarcely warm enough."

"Velveteen has a rich appearance! I will show you some," and forthwith she produces some beautiful blue-black material, soft and rich in texture, upon which Dallas instantly decides, and having hinted that he requires some gloves, the girl brings out a box of delicately-tinted greys. "What size, sir?"

"I don't know, but I think quite the smallest you have," and with her aid he selects three pairs of the best, and giving orders that the goods shall be forwarded early in the morning, discharges his bill, and goes out, conscious of the significant smiling looks that follow him.

He has spent more than he can well afford, but thinking of Phil's pleasure he does not regret this, and walks home in a cheerful frame of mind.

Passing the post-office he sees Gordon Chase about to consign a square small parcel to its keeping, and frowning a little he goes on his way, wondering what his offering is.

St. Valentine's Day dawns foggy and dark, with a small snow falling, which thaws before it touches the earth; and Philippa looking out says—

"Oh, dear, what a horrid morning, and how I pity the poor unfortunate postmen!"

"They are paid for all they do," remarks Mrs. Hurst, who is more than usually fretful, "and really I cannot see they have any cause for complaint."

Robin breaks in eagerly, anxious to divert his mother's thoughts.

"Philippa, I wonder if you'll get a valentine? I'm sure you ought, because you're so awfully pretty."

The girl laughs and blushes.

"Nonsense, Robin, and I wonder who would be likely to send me anything? See, here comes the postman. Oh! what a pile he is leaving for pretty Miss Mason. Robin! Robin! he is actually coming *here*!"

"I told you so," says Robin, triumphantly, and runs out into the tiny hall.

Two packages fall through the letter box. One the boy recognises as his own; the other is a small square package, rather heavy, and addressed in Gordon's familiar handwriting.

"You greedy Phil, two for you, and none for anyone else!" he cries, gaily. "Here you are! Pray make haste, and let us see what you have."

"Patience!" says Philippa, laughing and blushing, and all of a tremor with excitement. "Let us examine this first," and tearing open the envelope she displays a piece of rich-coloured ribbon. Instinctively she knows who has sent it, but she knows, too, Robin will be disappointed if she taxes him with it. So with the prettiest pretence of perplexity, she holds it out towards him, saying, "Robin, dear, who can have been so kind as to send this, and to remember crimson is my favourite colour? I never had a valentine I liked so much!"

The boy looks pleased, but Mrs. Hurst says fretfully,—

"What a fuss you make over trifles. Why don't you open your other present?"

Frowning a little the girl cuts the string, and lifting the lid displays a beautiful watch and chain, accompanied by a slip of paper, on which is written, "With my heart's best love. —GORDON CHASE."

"He intended I should not be unmindful of the giver and his generosity," Phil says, flashing. "As if I could or would accept so costly a gift from him!"

"I really don't see why you should not, Philippa. There is no earthly reason."

"Don't you see, mother, if I permit him to make such offerings I am tacitly accepting him?"

"You could not do better. He is steady, well-to-do, of respectable birth, and it is not every man who would marry a girl with such a blot on her name as there is on yours. You never mean to return the watch, Philippa?"

"Indeed, yes, mother; and pray, pray understand I can never marry Gordon!"

Mrs. Hurst begins a lecture, in which she introduces sundry old proverbs, such as "going through a wood and picking up a crooked stick," and a "bird in the hand being worth two in the bush," when she is interrupted by an imperative knock at the door.

Robin again runs out, returning this time with a large, white box, under which he staggers a little.

"Oh! Phil, how lucky you are! Here is something else; a man like a porter brought it! Make haste, make haste, and show us what you've got this time."

Phil eyes it doubtfully.

"It is too large to be good; perhaps it is an internal machine. Oh dear! oh dear!" laughing, "I'm half afraid to open it. Robin, out the string!"

And in another moment the boy displays to her astonished view the rich folds of velvet, the delicately-tinted gloves.

"My goodness, Phil, you are in luck's way! I wonder who knew you wanted a fresh frock? The writing is a lady's. Why don't you speak?"

"I simply couldn't. I was so taken by surprise. Mother, mother, isn't it lovely?"

"Yes," and Mrs. Hurst speaks with animation. "I am glad, Phil, we will begin to make it to-day; the linings won't cost much. After all, it is a good thing Mr. Denman wished you to extend your holiday."

"Robin, we'll go to church together on Sunday morning, and I shall use this lovely ribbon to brighten up my hat. How dreadfully

imposing I shall feel!" and she executes a wild dance round the room. "I've no scruple in accepting it, as it comes from one of my own sex; I wonder if little Miss Rose is my fairy god-mother? She is a nice old lady, and always good to me!"

"She has a great deal of money," supplements Mrs. Hurst.

This evening Robin takes tea with his new friend, and tells him freely all that has happened to Philippa to-day and Dallas listens demurely, yet with a spice of mischief in his eyes, until the boy tells him of Gordon's gift. Then he asks abruptly,—

"Is there any engagement between your sister and Mr. Chase?"

"Oh, no! and Phil vows she will not keep his valentine, and mother is angry with her because of it. You see, mother is afraid she may marry a poor man, and have to work hard for a living, as she has done since father—"

"Since your father died," Dallas says gently and pitifully; but the boy looks up quickly with a flash of shame on his delicate face, and a suspicious moisture in his bright, blue eyes.

"I think, Mr. Muir, you ought to know the truth, because you have been so very good to me. My father is not dead; he ran away from us three years ago."

Dallas is startled, but he says, pitifully,—

"Do not tell me any more, my boy; it is too sad for you."

"I would rather you heard it from me," naively, "and then you will never hurt mother or Phil by speaking of him. He took to cards and drink, and lost all his business, (we used to be well-to-do once), and then he went to work for Mr. Pamplin, the brewer, and—and he embezzled two hundred pounds, and had to go away, or he would have been sent to gaol."

"Poor boy! poor boy!"

"Oh, I don't care so much for myself as for Phil. She suffered awfully at the time, and does now, although she never lets us see it. There's no one like Phil," and then he proceeds to tell his companion of the girl's wonderful valentine, which they are almost certain comes from Miss Rose, and how busy Philippa is making the new gown, so that they may go to church together on the Sunday."

"I wish you would let me form one of your party, Robin."

"Oh, we should be glad. It would be such a treat for us. Do come!"

In the meanwhile Gordon has arrived, and casting a swift glance at Phil takes his seat as near as possible to her. She barely notices his entrance, and keeping her eyes bent persistently upon her work, sews as though her very life depended on it.

"How busy you are, Philippa? Have you nothing to say?"

"Not a word to throw at a dog!" she quotes in a cold voice. "I find if I talk much my work suffers!"

"Then for pity's sake put it away. You have three days before you in which to finish it. I want to hear what the fates have done for you to-day. Have they been kind?"

"Too kind," briefly, and then to her alarm Mrs. Hurst quietly slips from the room.

"Phil, did you get my gift? And, if so, why are you not wearing it?"

She lifts her dark eyes to the fair, weak face.

"Mr. Chase, I am sorry you should have sent me so costly a present, and, forgive me, I cannot accept so much from you!"

"Under certain circumstances you might accept more. You know, Phil, how dearly I love you, how anxious I am to make you my wife. I have tried hard to tell you all you are to me many, many times, but I have always failed. Dear, if you would but listen to me you should never have a care or a want; and I am able to provide liberally for your mother and the boys."

"You are very good," she answers, unsteadily, "but you ought to know I am not to be bribed to consent; and not even for my

dear ones' sakes will I marry a man I do not love—and—pardon me—cannot esteem. Please take back your present. It was kindly meant, but I cannot forget what I owe to myself—"

"Do you forget," he interrupts quickly, "that I am able and willing to refund the money your father embosomed to Pamplin? That until it is paid to the uttermost farthing he never can return to Merton?"

"I forget nothing; and although I sorrow and suffer for my father's sin I will not believe it my duty to save him from the consequences of it by spoiling all my life. You are not generous to urge this so persistently upon me!"

She still tenders him the little box, still meets his angry gaze with calm and steady eyes. In a sudden excess of passion he cries,—

"You will be sorry for this, you will be sorry!" and strikes down her hand violently. The watch lies shivered at her feet, and the poor weak wretch, recalled to his senses, cries,—

"Forgive me, Phil, forgive me! I was beside myself!"

Stoically she points to the broken bauble.

"Take it up and go!" she says in a hard voice. "Although a felon's daughter I am yet unused to insults!"

And like a chidden child he obeys her, and she stands watching him until the door has closed upon him.

CHAPTER III.

The following Sunday Phil, in an irreproachably fitting dress, with the neatest of gloves, and a hat brightened by Robin's timely gift, comes downstairs to find Dallas and the boy waiting her.

"Oh!" cries Robin, "how jolly you look! I never was so proud of you in all my life!" and he squeezes one little hand laid so lovingly on his arm. "Mr. Muir, did you ever see anyone look nicer?"

"Oh, hush!" says Phil, laughing and blushing, "you will make me quite a vain young woman; and you should remember, Robin, all people do not see with your eyes. So you have quite decided to go with us to church, Mr. Muir?"

"If you will allow me. Your brother says the service is good, the singing excellent, and if you will take pity on my loneliness and allow me to accompany you I shall be only too grateful!"

"Come!" she answers, with a smile, and they pass out into the keen, frosty air.

How pretty she is! What a little lady she looks, with her dainty face and slim, young figure—richly clad for once! Dallas finds himself regarding her with very honest and open admiration; and when he stands beside her in the grand old church, listening to her sweet, pure voice chanting the old familiar chants, his heart beats faster than it has ever done in all his twenty-six years.

Gordon Chase is there, too, looking gloomy and savage; but Philippa does not seem to see him. All her thoughts are occupied by the music and the very eloquent sermon which follows.

It is not until they are leaving the church that she becomes aware of his close proximity; and Dallas, to whom the story of the watch is known, regards her curiously.

From throat to brow spreads the deep crimson flush, and her whole manner is slightly confused as she returns Gordon's greeting. For once he will not be shaken off, and, to her disgust, she is compelled to introduce him to the secretary.

The next moment she finds herself walking beside him, with Dallas and Robin a little in advance.

"Philippa," the young man says, meekly, "why are you so angry with me? Did I commit an unpardonable sin when I sent you that valentine?"

"I wish you would not refer to it!" she

answers, distressfully. "Why can't you be content to remain friends? I should like you in such a relationship, but—but, Gordon, I cannot think of you as you wish!"

"Won't you try? Upon my soul, Phil, you never should have an ungratified wish. I would refuse you nothing; I would submit my will to you in all things."

She makes a swift gesture indicative of scorn, but her voice is calm and even kind when she answers,—

"Please say no more. The picture you paint is not a pleasant one to me. As your wife I should develop into a termagant, and holding you in such low esteem should at length come to despise you utterly!"

"You do not spare me," he says, bitterly. "I suppose you prefer a bully and a tyrant to one whose only pleasure is to serve you! If such is the case, I am indeed forbidden to hope. Oh, Phil! Phil! and I love you so!"

Her glorious dark eyes soften, the sweet lips quiver a moment, then she says, earnestly,—

"I am very, very sorry, Gordon. I would answer you differently if I could, for my mother's and the children's sake—but it is beyond me."

"You are taken by the first strange face you meet! You are putting that fellow Muir in the place which should be mine," he begins. Then the look on her face silences him.

"You have said more than enough!" Then, lifting her voice, "Robin, please wait for me," and so, with scant ceremony, leaves him.

But she looks so perturbed, is so flushed and ill-at-ease, that it is not hard for Dallas to guess something of what has transpired between the young couple, and he endeavours to divert her thoughts by chatting on commonplace subjects until they reach home. But she does not regain her ordinary manner until the evening.

The following day she returns to her uncongenial work; to the long hours of drudgery, such as none but those who have experienced it can understand; but, in all through all, she is cheered by a new, sweet joy which cannot be taken from her.

The nights are still dark, and she dreads the long walk home when the shop is closed. She is far too pretty to go through the streets unmolested, so that when, one evening, she finds Dallas waiting her she is unfeignedly glad.

For once in his life he has lost his usual sang-froid as he comes forward to greet her.

"I found myself in this vicinity, Miss Hurst," he says; "and remembering what a long walk you had before you, ventured to wait for you. I hope you do not consider me presumptuous?"

"I think you are very kind," she answers, in a voice less steady than usual. "I have a horror of the streets after dark, although I do not worry mother by confessing so to her. She has too much to bear already."

"You think of everyone but yourself," he says, with a touch of indignation. "You poor little soul, don't you ever feel the need of care and protection?"

"I must not think of such things," hurriedly. "I must learn to stand alone," and he speaks no more on the subject then, feeling he is on dangerous ground; but all his heart is torn with pity for this young, brave soul, fighting the bitter battle with the world, facing poverty and sorrow with a smiling front. Poor little girl! poor little Phil!

After this it is no uncommon event for Dallas to meet her, and her companions begin to tease her about her new lover. Gordon reproaches her, and, to make matters worse, Mrs. Hurst one night speaks to her openly on the subject.

"Philippa," she says, querulously, "you are making havoc of your life!"

"Mother!" in a startled tone. "What do you mean? What have I done?"

"You have done nothing yet that cannot be remedied, but you are spoiling all your prospects by your flirtation with Mr. Muir!"

The girl's sweet face flushes and pales alternately; her dark eyes will not meet her mother's as she says,—

"Dear, you must explain. Oh! I did not think you would believe me guilty of anything so vulgar as flirtation!"

"I would rather know you were flirting than in earnest," Mrs. Hurst says, sharply. "It would be simply madness to think seriously of Mr. Muir."

"Mother! mother!" entreatingly, "why do you say such things to me?"

"Because I am afraid for you. Phil, never marry a poor man. Surely you have seen enough of the evils of poverty, and Mr. Muir is only an obscure secretary, with an income hardly sufficient for his own wants. It would be impossible for him to support a wife decently."

Philippa sews on in silence, and Mrs. Hurst, taking up her parable, continues,—

"You ought to know there is no crime like poverty, no evil under the sun so much condemned. You had better be wickeder than poor, according to the world's logic. Oh, Phil, can't you think of Gordon? I should be so happy to hear you were promised to him."

With a passionate gesture the girl flings her work aside, and kneeling with her face on her mother's lap, says, brokenly,—

"Darling mother! You would not break my heart? You would not willingly give me to a man I neither love nor respect? Oh, let me stay with you, love you, work for you, but never force me into a marriage I can regard with nothing but loathing!"

"You are the most unreasonable girl I ever knew!" Mrs. Hurst says angrily. "I wonder how you dare presume to despise Gordon! He is a better match than you could hope for, under the existing circumstances, and but for Dallas Muir I believe you would have listened to him."

The colour flames high in the young girl's face.

"Mother, you should not say such cruel things to me. Under no circumstances could I listen to Mr. Chase! Please let us consider the subject closed," and with that she rises, and begins once more to sew rapidly.

So the months slip by until June comes, and then one day Dallas meets her on the stairs.

"It is so rarely I see you now," he says, "and I have been anxious to tell you of a change in my plans. Lord Sourby leaves England on Thursday, and I go with him."

Her face is white as snow, her eyes will not meet his.

"This is rather sudden, is it not?" she questions in an uncertain voice.

"I have known it for a week, but have had no chance of telling you," he answers.

"Of course I shall keep the rooms on," (he cannot bear the idea of another lodger filling his place, walking and talking with Philippa), "and I shall be away until the sixth of September. We are going to do France and Italy."

"I—I hope—you will have a good voyage—and enjoy yourself greatly—Mr. Muir," the girl says, tremulously. "It will be a pleasant change for you."

He longs to catch her to his arms, to tell her all this parting means for him! But he is so poor, so poor! and she is the mainstay of her little family. So he says, rather confusedly,—

"You will not quite forget me, Miss Hurst? You will keep a little kindly remembrance in your heart for a lonely wretch?"

"You have been very good to me," simply; "and I shall not forget you."

Oh, if he would only go away before she betrays herself! If only he would have mercy on her bruised and bleeding heart! But he still stands before her, and she must bear this interview as best she may.

"I have already told Mrs. Hurst of the change in my arrangements; and, upon my word, I believe she is glad to be rid of me," laughing bitterly. "I wonder if I shall come

back and find you engaged to that weak, handsome, well-to-do Chase?"

"No, no," more fervently than she has any idea of speaking. "That will never be."

He leans a little nearer.

"This is Tuesday. In two days I shall be gone. Who can tell how we shall meet again, or if, indeed, we shall ever stand face to face again? I would like to think we parted friends—the dearest and best of friends. I would like to carry away with me some token that through these three weary months I shall not be forgotten. Philippa!—Philippa!—do you think—I might kiss you?"

Oh, the lovely colour which floods cheek and brow, the trembling joy which possesses her whole soul. She cannot speak, hardly can she breathe, and Dallas, in a sudden rapture, stooping, kisses her sweet lips once; but when he would speak a door below opens and Mrs. Hurst's voice says impatiently,—

"Phil, why are you so long? If you cannot find the odious place say so," and like a guilty thing the girl wreaths herself from her lover and flies downstairs—and that is their good-bye.

July, August and September pass, but still Dallas does not return; and Phil's courage begins to fail her, when a letter comes from him to Mrs. Hurst, in which he says,—

"MY DEAR MRS. HURST,—I regret to say I shall not return to Merton until the thirtieth of November. Lord Sourby has decided to go on to Algiers. But you will please keep the rooms for me, (I enclose cheque for rental, &c.) and pray assure Miss Philippa she is at perfect liberty to use my small library. I shall be pleased to think she is doing so. May I ask you, too, to convey my regrets to her that I was unable to wish her good-bye. I shall have most wonderful stories to tell Robin when I return.—And now, with best wishes for all, believe me, dear Mrs. Hurst, yours very sincerely,

"DALLAS MUIR."

His mention of her, casual as it was, cheers the girl's drooping spirits. But, oh! what a weary while she must wait before she sees his face again and hears the well-known tones of that dear voice.

There is much to trouble her now. Mrs. Hurst is daily pressing Gordon's suit upon her. Her father has written for money, saying he is in absolute want; and, worse still, Robin—her darling Robin—is very far from well.

He complains of a continual pain in his side, and his cough is so violent that Phil, lying awake at night listening to it, shudders and prays in her heart that Heaven will spare her this young life. She loves him so! she loves him so! and daily the hectic colour brightens on his hollow cheeks, and his eyes shine with unnatural brilliancy.

"Cannot you send him to Bournemouth?" the doctor asks; and with an expressive glance at Philippa Mrs. Hurst says,—

"Under the circumstances, no. I would sacrifice anything to do so."

"Never mind, mother," says Robin, cheerfully, "I shall be all right in the spring."

In the spring! Oh, poor boy! poor boy!

CHAPTER IV.

It is the thirtieth of November, and as Philippa steps out into the foggy, heavy air she gives a little shiver of disgust; it is a long walk to her home, and already she is tired. Things have been particularly trying to-day, and she has been far from well; but she is not a girl to brood long over her own misfortunes, and so begins to walk briskly in the homeward direction.

Not another line has reached them from Dallas, and she is not at all hopeful that he will return to-day. Her heart is very heavy within her, and she wonders miserably if, after all, he had been playing with her, if

indeed his farewell kiss had been the outcome of pitying contempt.

With her eyes cast down she is quite unconscious that he is approaching her in an opposite direction, or that a figure with shambling gait is following her uncertainly. And just as Dallas draws nearer the second figure hurries forward, a large, strong hand is laid upon her shoulder, and a suave voice says, softly,—

"Philippa!"

With a low cry she falls back against the wall, and under the gaslight her face shows white and horror-stricken. With a bound Dallas is beside her, but the word she utters stays the blow he is all too ready to inflict.

"Father! you here! Oh! this is madness indeed!"

That abject, cringing wretch Philippa's father! Oh, it is impossible!

"Miss Hurst," the young man says, "can I do nothing to help you?"

With a passionate gesture of shame and humiliation she covers her eyes.

"Nothing, Mr. Muir—nothing. I—I am only a little astonished to see my father. He has been so long away, but—but my mother will be pleased."

All the while Edwin Hurst watches the young couple intently, though furtively. He is a man who might be called handsome but for the sensual mouth and shifty eyes; and he has the manner of a gentleman—when he chooses.

Now he turns to Dallas, and lifting his shabby hat courteously says,—

"I am afraid I must introduce myself, as my sudden appearance has quite startled my daughter. The fact is, through misfortune I have been compelled to leave my family for many months."

And suddenly Philippa breaks in.

"This is my father, Mr. Muir. Father, this gentleman is our lodger—Mr. Dallas Muir. Now, for pity's sake, let us get home. Pull your hat low over your eyes; there are many who will recognise you," and with a craven air the man obeys her.

Phil takes them by a very circuitous route, through bye-ways and lanes, until at last they reach her home; then she goes before them to prepare her mother for her father's coming. Mrs. Hurst and Robin are sitting together, and the latter, seeing Phil's pale, agitated face, rises hurriedly, saying,—

"Oh! what has happened? How frightened you look! And do you know Mr. Muir is back again?"

"I know," drearily. "Robin, mother, he has returned—father! He is outside!"

And while Robin shrinks back the wife cries out wildly, gladly,—

"Edwin!" and in a moment she has her arms about her husband's neck and is kissing him, weeping on his breast, and murmuring loving words he is so far from desiring or deserving. Robin sits with covered face; he remembers too well the life they led "before father went away," but Phil steals into the little hall, and leaning her face upon the cold, damp wall, tries to meet the terrible future bravely.

It is thus Dallas finds her.

"Miss Hurst! Philippa, is there nothing I can do for you? Believe me, my heart aches for you; I know so well what you are suffering—"

"Go away," she says, in a choked voice, "your pity kills me!"

"How can I leave you thus?" urgently. "Heaven knows if I can help you I will!"

"You are very good! but the only way in which you can help us is to keep silence about his return. Oh! do not blame me overmuch when I say that his face is the last face I desired to see. I must speak or go mad! He has blighted our lives, lived on our labour, neglected us in prosperity, robbed us in his adversity. He has dowered us with shame, made us a byword and a reproach to our friends, and yet my mother would sacrifice any and all of us for his good. He has stolen

back under shelter of the night, and here he must lie hidden until we can furnish sufficient funds for his escape. He dare not appear in the open day. Oh Heaven! have I not suffered enough? What more am I called on to bear?"

"Philippa, you shall not bear this burden alone," begins Dallas, when Robin's tearful voice close by says,—

"Phil, dear, mother says, 'will you please get father's supper ready, and see that Mr. Muir has all he requires.'"

"I want nothing, thank you," Dallas answers, quickly. "Go to your father, Miss Hurst. Doubtless there is much you have to hear and to tell," and so he goes to his room, his heart aching for this poor, young thing, his brain full of futile plans for Edwin Hurst's future benefit. Money he cannot give, seeing he has scarcely enough for his own wants.

To his dismay Phil avoids him from tonight. It is vain to wait her egress from the shop, for she either contrives to elude him, or protects herself by walking home with one of the girls. He sees, too, the sweet, dainty face is growing very thin and pale, that in the dark eyes there are heavy shadows, and the tender mouth has a downward, sorrowful curve.

Since his return home Edwin Hurst has lain a close prisoner, only venturing after dark into the large, high-walled garden, and he is particularly careful not to be seen of the lodger. Gordon Chase is a frequent visitor, but Hurst avoids him scrupulously, taking refuge in an adjoining room, and an uncomfortable air of mystery pervades the whole house.

One day, late in December, Dallas comes upon Robin seated on the stairs, just outside his door, and, in surprise, asks,—

"Why are you here, my boy? Why do you never come up to tea now?"

"Father is afraid I should tell you too much of our affairs," the boy answers, lifting a pinched face, and great star-like eyes to the young man's. "But I miss our comfortable talks; and so, often when you do not guess it, I sit here and listen to you moving about, and wish I were with you."

"Come in now!" authoritatively. "Why, Robin lad, what have they been doing to you?"

A faint smile crosses the pale young lips!

"Oh, I'm all right, thank you, Mr. Muir; but I worry about things, and my cough is just a little troublesome. Then Phil isn't the same at all. She does not laugh or sing any more, although she is kinder than ever me. Oh, Mr. Muir, our Phil is an angel!"

"I believe she deserves all your love and all your praise!" warmly.

"Oh, indeed, yes, and more, far more besides; but I wish she would not fret about me. Mr. Muir, if you see her, will you convince her, somehow, that I am not ill—only a trifle tired and worried?" and he sits clasping and unclasping the poor frail fingers which shall never toil and never grow old. The young man's heart aches for him, and his voice is very gentle as he makes answer,—

"I rarely see your sister now, Robin. She seems to avoid me."

"Oh, no, no! she thinks so highly of you. Why, I asked her one day if she liked you as well as Gordon, and she looked at me, half-laughing and half-vexed, then she said—"

"Well, Robin, what did she say?" as the boy pauses a moment.

"I was trying to remember her exact words. I have them now. Phil said, 'Gordon Chase is not to be named in the same breath as Mr. Muir; he, (meaning you), is the stuff heroes are made of.'"

Dallas flashes uncomfortably, but Robin is intent upon the fire, so he says, lightly,—

"I am proud to have won Miss Hurst's good opinion, although, indeed, she flatters me too highly. Now, draw up to the table, and let us discuss these excellent muffins before they get cold. By the way, has your mother called in a doctor to you?"

"Oh, yes, more than a week ago, and he

says I ought to go away for a time to Bournemouth or Hastings; but we cannot afford it, and the spring will soon be here, and I shall pick up my strength!"

Dallas very much doubts that. It is plain to him that death has already set his seal on the fair young brow, that the pure young life is drifting—drifting towards the unknown shore, and he determines to speak to Philippa about the boy. And whilst they sit chatting in a desultory fashion the girl is below with her mother and Gordon. She is very white, and the young face is sterner, harder, than it should be as she listens to her mother's words.

"Philippa, in your selfishness you will not see that Robin is daily wasting away, that only residence in some warmer place can save him, and yet you will not stretch out your hand to do this. You think only of your own wishes!"

"Mother," the girl cries in piteous entreaty, "don't I know that he is very, very ill? And would not I give my heart's blood to save him? Oh! I would not seem to praise myself, but do I not bring you weekly the whole of my scanty earnings? What more can I do?"

Then Gordon speaks.

"Philippa, if you will only marry me all your troubles and hardships shall be at an end! From the day I have your promise Robin's future comfort will be assured. I will deny you nothing, and I will love him for your sake—for your sake hold him dear as a brother."

She looks from one to the other wildly, clasping and unclasping her hands in a feverish way.

"You urge me too sorely. You have no pity on me," she says under her breath. "Will you lay waste all my life? What would you have, Gordon Chase? A wife who despises you, who shrinks from your mere touch; who thinks how goodly her life might have been but for you? Heaven help me! if it is my duty to marry you, then indeed am I wretched beyond all women!"

The handsome, weak face, flashes.

"You know how to hurt, Philippa, and you are not saving of your power; but I am willing to forget and forgive all your harsh words if you will grant my prayer. I will go further. On the day I call you mine I will pay Pamplin the money due to him from Mr. Hurst, so that he may at once return home."

"You offer me every inducement to marry you. You tempt me almost beyond my strength, and yet—yet—oh, I cannot do this thing!" and she breaks off suddenly.

"I will not press you too hard. I will not ask an answer now. I will be very patient if you will only give me a little hope. Remember how I love you!"

"I am not likely to forget," bitterly, "seeing that your love forbids you to have compassion on me. Please say no more now; leave me to think."

That night, as Robin lies sleepless on his bed the door is gently opened, and he knows by the soft, almost noiseless tread it is Phil who enters. She carries no light, but she finds her way easily to his side, and dropping on her knees throws her arms about him, drawing his only head down upon her breast.

"Robin," she whispers, "are you in pain now? Are you so very, very ill, my darling?"

"No, no, Phil dear! Don't you worry. I shall be all right in the spring."

"But it is so long until then, my dear one; and you have many, many cold days to suffer before it comes, Robin dear, would you like to go away?" and then it flashes on the boy what she means.

Just a moment he hesitates. He is so young and life so sweet; but the strong, heroic soul of the girl has its reflection in his, and almost before she can notice that pause he says emphatically—

"No, I should not, Phil. I am always happier at home, and I cannot think what I should do without you."

She gives a quick breath of relief which does not escape him, but says, quietly,—

"Think again, my darling boy. If you would like to go we can be together."

He cannot see her face, but he knows it is wet with bitter tears, and he answers, bravely,—

"You mean, Phil, if you marry Gordon he will take us both away? He is a mean sneak to try to bribe you, and we won't have any of his benefits! Phil, dear, do you—do you like him?"

A quick, convulsive shudder answers the question.

"Well, then, old lady, we won't talk of such nonsense again. Oh, I've had such a happy evening with Mr. Muir, and he spoke so nicely of you. Isn't it a pity he is not rich, and that he does not want to marry you?"

But Philippa makes no answer; only a little later, when she rises to go, she says,—

"Robin dear, if you should change your mind do not hesitate to tell me. Oh! brother! brother! there are so few to love me—I cannot spare you!"

Long after she has gone the boy lies pondering over her words "I cannot spare you." Is he, then, so very ill that she fears for his life? Oh, he is too young, too young to die! Anything is better than death; and supposing Phil married Gordon she would soon learn to be happy with him, and he (Robin), would grow strong and well again, and labour all his life to repay her for her goodness. Then, in a sudden access of self-scorn and hate, the poor boy hides his face in his pillows, praying for strength to combat his desires and courage to face the end.

The next morning when Philippa has left the house behind she hears heavy steps, and all the blood rushes from her heart to throat, and cheek, and brow as she recognises them. In an instant they have reached her, and a familiar voice is saying,—

"Miss Hurst—Philippa, will you never speak to me again?"

What a pitiful face it is that turns upon him. How the white lips quiver in a vain attempt at speech. In silence she offers her hand, which he, clasping, does not readily release.

"I want to speak to you about Robin. Do you realise how very ill he is?"

The next moment he hates himself for his incautions words. The girl is deadly white, and the deep eyes are full of agonised tears.

"I know," she says, under her breath, "it breaks my heart to see the change in him. But I—what can I do? Dr. Marfleet orders him away, but we are poor, and in only one way can I obtain the necessary funds."

"You mean you can do this by marrying Gordon Chase? Is it not so, Philippa?"

"Yes," drearily; "and sometimes I think it is my duty to do so. And always my heart cries out to me to save my brother—he is so dear to me, so dear!"

"And does he wish it?" in a hoarse, uncertain voice.

"No, oh no! Robin is always unselfish."

"It cannot be your duty to marry a man you despise, even to save your brother. Philippa, hope on a little while. Give me time to think over this unhappy state of affairs. Perhaps I shall find a way out of the tangle; and, remember, in all your troubles, in all your anxieties, I am your friend, and that you cannot sorrow alone."

CHAPTER V.

JANUARY comes and finds Robin no better, but rather worse, and Edwin Hurst, weary of his enforced seclusion, grows more and more irritable and morose—more difficult to please.

It is very hard now to make both ends meet, harder even than Dallas imagines, and he has no idea how cruel Philippa's life is. He rarely sees her, and so perhaps when they do meet he notices the change in her more quickly

than another might; and Gordon coming and going urges his suit persistently.

Mrs. Hurst says nothing now either for or against him, "but her father urged her sair, and lookit in her eyes till her heart was like to break," and daily Robin is wasting away.

Then one night Gordon meets her, and there is a great light of triumph in his blue eyes, an exultant smile about the weak mouth.

"Phil, I ventured to wait for you because I have something of importance to tell you. To-day I went to yours at an unexpected hour, and suddenly learnt the reason for your and your mother's evident discomforts during my recent visits. I discovered that your father is in hiding in his own home."

"Well," she says, forcing the pale lips to frame that one word steadily.

"It is not well. It is simply madness for him to remain here, every day running the risk of detection. Why, if I chose to speak Pamplin would have him arrested without delay, and without compunction."

"But you would not do it? Oh, Gordon, the shame of it would break my mother's heart!" and in an access of dreadful fear she lays one thin hand on his arm, looking into his face with agonised entreaty.

"You know I would rather die than hurt you," passionately; "but I am only mortal, and if I keep your secret and assist your father out of this difficulty I want my reward. You know well what that must be, Philippa?"

She falls a little from him, growing whiter and wilder of face.

"Have mercy upon me! Already my strength is taxed to the utmost. Oh, you are too young to be wholly without compassion! Pity me now, and do not ask this thing of me!"

"No man is unselfish where he loves!" suddenly. "I have named my price!"

"It is one I am not prepared to pay. You are less than man to demand it!" and she would leave him, but he is too quick for her.

"Phil, ever since I first spoke of love to you, more than two years ago, you have flouted and scorned me, made me the butt of your derision and merriment, and I have borne all this uncomplainingly—have clung to you in and through all. But even a worm will turn; and stung by the contempt with which you rejected my gift last February, I swore you should be my wife with or without your will. My day has come, and I can demand my own terms. Give me your promise to marry me on St. Valentine's day, and I will not only square matters with Pamplin, but Robin shall go with us on our honeymoon tour. Our home shall be his, and I will secure the best medical advice possible for him. If you refuse, you know the alternative!"

She looks at him in great fear and trembling. Instinctively she recognises the obstinacy of a weak nature; but she has always been able to rule him, to sway his thoughts and feelings, and so now she tries her old power upon him.

"Gordon!" she entreats, in her softest voice, "you say you love me, and indeed I believe you do; and does not love desire the happiness and welfare of its object? Yes, yes; and I cannot think you would willingly doom me to a life of misery. I appeal now to your generosity, your manhood, to keep our wretched secret, and to let me go free. I shall thank you, bless you all my days. I will try to serve you in anything you may desire."

"Be quiet," he says so roughly that she is startled. "I have spoken, and I shall not go from my word. Because I have always been your slave, your dupe, you think I shall remain so to the end of the chapter; but you are mistaken! I tell you, you have run to the end of your tether! It is my turn now!"

Oh, the indignant pride, the bitter scorn on the sweet, white face.

"Thank you for your plain speaking," she says, coldly. "We understand each other now."

"Phil, you send me into saying things that anger you. Why are you so cold and hard?"

What have I ever done to make you hate me so bitterly?"

"I do not hate, I only heartily despise you; and I should be glad if you would leave me!"

"I am going home with you," stolidly. "I intend to see your father to-night, and to lay my proposals before him!"

"You will, of course, please yourself without any reference to my wishes!" and then this ill-assorted pair walk on in silence until they reach Philippa's home.

She enters first, and leading the way to the common sitting-room says, in a high, hard voice,—

"Father, I bring you a visitor. Gordon Chase is most anxious you should understand your perilous position, and charitably offers you an easy way of escape."

She flings down her hat and muff, and, standing by the mantel, waits for her lover to break the ensuing silence.

He is not quick to do this. The scorn on the girl's white face, the defiance in her eyes, her attitude, is hardly likely to render his self-imposed task easier.

Mr. Hurst is the first to speak.

"What is it, Chase? Has any one heard that I am here?"

"No, sir, not yet; but the news will soon be common property unless we can come to terms. The fact is—"

"The fact is," Philippa breaks in, "Mr. Chase generously offers to screen you from justice, to repay Mr. Pamplin the sum you embezzled," (what a dreadful way she has of calling a spade a spade), "of providing for Robin's future, in return for the poor gift of your only daughter."

"Gordon, you're a noble fellow!" cries Mr. Hurst, effusively, "and of course there is nothing left for Philippa to do but consent—not for my sake, but for her mother's and Robin's. My dear girl, how very lucky you are!"

"Father!" and suddenly she sinks on her knees beside him, and, with her sweet face uplifted, says slowly and impressively, "Father, I am your only girl, and I have always tried to do my duty by you. Surely you love me well enough to forbid this sacrifice he demands? In some way we will save you—but oh, for Heaven's sake, not in this way. Listen to me—a moment—only a moment! I not only do not love him, but from the bottom of my heart despise and loathe him. If you give me to him you will make a wretched and desperate woman of me. You will kill all of good there is in my nature!"

"You talk like a fool, girl! What more do you desire than Gordon offers? He is a far better match than you could hope for. He is devoted to you and steady enough for you to feel sure of your future comfort."

"Mother!" the wretched girl pleads, "speak for me! By the love you bear my father, which has made you regard his sins as errors of judgment, his failures as misfortunes, which has taught you to forgive and forget harshness and neglect, plead for me!"

"Oh! Philippa!" sobs the mother, "how can I ask you to send your father to prison, to condemn us all to misery and disgrace, to consign Robin to an early grave?"

With a sudden low cry Philippa flings out her arms.

"Oh, Heaven, help me! Teach me what to do!"

Then springing to her feet she confronts Gordon.

"You all goad me on to sin, and on your heads must rest the blame of all that may follow. I have tried to do my duty by you. I have tried to cleave to the right, but it is useless. Fate is strong, and I am weak. Gordon Chase, you know in what respect I hold you, and if I consent to your proposal you must expect nothing but dull submission from me. Give me a week in which to decide!"

"Now you are talking like a sensible girl," remarks Mr. Hurst, "and I am sure that in time you will be very glad you acted

upon our advice instead of indulging in all sorts of romantic and silly notions."

One look she casts upon him that makes him shrink from her as she passes. Her mother stretches out her hand to her imploringly.

"Phil, Phil, dear. Oh! believe it is all for the best."

"Poor mother!" the girl says, dreamily, "poor mother, I do not blame you;" but when Gordon would stay her, she breaks out curtly, "Let me go! I have conceded enough already to your wishes!" and so goes up to Robin's room.

"Are you asleep, dear?" she questions, gently, and as he answers in the negative she enters, and closing the door behind her, sinks in her favourite attitude beside the bed, and remains silent awhile, with her face hidden in his curls.

"Phil, old girl, what is the matter?" he asks. "Are you crying?"

"No, Robin, no; only my heart is heavy to-night, and I cannot see my duty clearly."

"Oh, bother duty!" he answers, inelegantly, "It strikes me, Phil, dear, it is about time you had a little pleasure. What's the special question vexing you?"

"You told me this morning you were better," remarks the girl, irrelevantly. "Was that quite true? or did you say it just to keep me from worrying?"

"I'm all-right when this horrid pain doesn't catch my breath and the cough doesn't half choke me. Oh, I shall get through the winter bravely yet—but—but—" wistfully, "I do wish we lived at some warmer place."

She draws her breath quickly, and in her heart she prays, "Heaven help me to make the sacrifice, and let a blessing rest upon it;" then she says, cheerfully,—

"Robin, perhaps we shall manage to get away yet—you and I—and I shall nurse you well again. We will be so happy—so happy—and—and—" and here her courage suddenly fails her, and breaking utterly down she sobs and laughs hysterically.

The boy is alarmed.

"Shall I call mother? Oh, Phil! Phil! what do you mean? Why are you crying so bitterly?"

"I—I am so foolishly happy—because—because I see a way of helping you."

"You don't mean you will marry Gordon? Why, you've said again and again you hate him!"

"I know; but I was a wicked, ungrateful girl. He is so good and generous; he has promised to let me have you with me always, to help father, and look after you as if you were his brother, and he will take us away to some beautiful sunny place where you will grow strong and manly."

"Oh, Phil!" with a deep-drawn breath of delight, "how jolly! But—but if you are not quite sure you will be happy you must not do this thing for my sake. I could not bear to see you wretched; but Phil, dear, it is hard to die so young! I would like to live a little longer, if only to repay some of your goodness."

She holds him fast, this young, dear brother, and her eyes, full of divine tenderness, rest on his pinched, flushed face. She has asked for a week in which to consider Gordon's proposal, but already in her mind she has accepted it. How can she lose this young creature who loves her so well? How can she bear to think that she might have saved him, and she would not?

But all to-night she lies sleepless on her bed, tossing to and fro, murmuring passionate, incoherent prayers; now and again breathing one name which is certainly not Gordon's, and wondering, miserably, how she shall bear to live through all the heavy months and years which, in all probability, lie before her.

Her mother is very kind and tender to her when she goes down the following morning, and urges her to eat; but this is impossible,

and hastily swallowing a cup of very weak coffee she starts for business.

How she lives through the day she cannot tell. Even her employer, a man intent only on amassing riches, and never careful to spare the young creatures who labour for so scanty a wage, comments on her excessive pallor and general lassitude. And she, poor girl, full of fear lest he shall tell her to take a week's rest, which means also loss of a week's salary, strives to smile and act as though no trouble weighs upon her, no momentous question vexes and terrifies her. Poor little Philippa, so young and so helpless!

That night, as she is going wearily up to Robin's room, Dallas meets her on the stairs, and is so shocked by her appearance that he cannot suppress an exclamation of pity.

"You are ill!" he says, taking one little slender hand in his, and suddenly she resolves to tell him all her troubles. If any one can help her it is he, and has he not promised unreservedly to do so?

"I am not ill," she says gently, "only very much perplexed. Mr. Muir, once you said you would help me should I need help at any time."

"You need it now?" gently. "Come into my room and tell me all your troubles!"

Like a child she obeys, like a child takes the seat he offers, and then, without prelude of any sort, confides her story to him. He listens with averted face and frowning brow; inwardly he curses the poverty that will not let him speak. But when she has made an end of the pitiful history, he lays his hand gently on her clasped and trembling fingers, and says gravely,—

"My dear Miss Hurst, terrible as your life is now it would be infinitely worse should you marry this man, not loving him. There would be mutual recriminations, thoughts of what might have been, visions of happiness never to be realised. Marriage without love is an accursed thing. I can't see how to help you yet; I must think it all out. You say you have a weak of grace. Heaven grant me some inspiration before it expires! I know nothing more terrible than your calamity, unless, indeed, it is my utter impotence to help and comfort you. But, plainly, it cannot be your duty to sacrifice your life even to save a father and a brother, Philippa! Philippa, if I were only a rich man—for your sake—"

He breaks off hurriedly, but she has seen the look in his eyes, and has learned all that she is to him. Does that not make her task doubly hard? She rises, trembling in every limb.

"Mr. Muir, I ought to apologise for occupying so much of your time; but I felt I must speak, or my heart would burst with its load. I will try to remember what you have said—and—and—good-night!"

Her hand is in his, her face flushes and drops before his eager gaze; but he controls the mad impulse to kiss her, and says only,—

"Defer your answer to the latest moment. Heaven helping me, I will save you and yours yet. Try to keep a brave heart, and remember that I shall labour for you with all my soul, with all my strength! Good-night, little Phil, good-night!"

CHAPTER VI.

THREE days go by with lightning speed, and as yet Dallas can see no way out of Phil's difficulties save the one proposed; and he thinks with horror that, after all, he will have to confess his impotence to help her—to crush out the hope he himself has raised in her heart. He cannot do it. Strong man as he is he dare not look on the anguish of the sweet, white face, which has grown all too dear to him; and then he thinks of her as another man's wife!

The fourth morning dawns, and Dallas, sitting over his breakfast, is scanning the paper when Mrs. Hurst enters with his letters. The first he takes up is in a blue envelope, and the handwriting is very familiar to him.

"Good gracious! It is from Scruby! What can he have to say to me? Perhaps the poor old squire has relented; but that is hardly likely, with uncle Bart at his elbow! Well, here goes!" and he tears open the official-looking envelope.

"DEAR SIR, (he reads).—

"It is my painful duty to acquaint you with the sad accident which deprives you alike of grandfather and uncle. Two days back, whilst boating at Naples, they were drowned by the capsizing of the boat!"

"Great Heavens!" the young man cries, in an agitated way. "Both dead, both of them! and not a word of peace between us!"

He sits with his face hidden in his hands a moment; for although he had never loved his relatives the shock is great, and he owes all that he is to the elder man's generosity. When he has a little recovered he resumes his reading.

"The bodies will be conveyed to Chittington, where I now await you. In the absence of any will, you are sole heir to the estate and revenues. I have written to you quite informally, having known you all your life, and admiring, as I did, the independent course of action you adopted a year ago. Hoping you will lose no time in coming, as we wait your instructions,

"Yours faithfully,
"EDNEZER SCRUBY."

"I must go at once!" he says. Then the sudden thought comes to him. "My darling is saved; but at what a cost! Poor old man, I believe he would have been fond of me but for Bart."

Calling Mrs. Hurst, he tells her he is summoned from Merton, and must lose no time in obeying the message; and, begging her to pack a small portmanteau, sits down to write Philippa.

Ah, what comfort his note will carry to her aching, troubled heart! He hesitates a moment whether to entrust it to her mother. He has not very much faith in the poor, querulous little woman. Then a bright thought strikes him.

"I should like to wish Robin good-bye!" he says to her. "May I go up to him?"

"Certainly, Mr. Muir. I'm afraid he would fret if you went without a word."

Running up to the little room he finds the boy partially dressed before a huge fire.

"Robin, I am called away quite unexpectedly, but I could not go without seeing you. I don't know how long I shall be absent; and as I have something of importance to communicate with Miss Philippa I have ventured to write this note, which I entrust to you. Remember, you are to give it into her own hands as soon as she returns home to-night. You will not forget, when I tell you it is for her happiness and yours that she should get it."

"I shall not forget; but, Mr. Muir, I am sorry you are going. I shall miss you!"

A little later he leaves the house behind, and is soon well on his way to Chittington.

Mr. Scruby meets him at the station. "This is very sad, Dallas—perhaps I ought to say Mr. Muir—but you were always a favourite of mine."

"Let it be Dallas. I have a lively recollection of kind words and generous tips. By the way, are you quite sure there was no will left?"

"Quite! Your grandfather could never be induced to make one, and Mr. Bart did not urge it upon him. I think he hoped to inherit the whole as you have done. It is not good form to speak ill of the dead, but it is only plain truth, that your uncle loved gold above and before everything else."

"Yes, I am afraid it was so; and I am quite sure he often influenced my grandfather for evil. But there let it rest. He is dead, and beyond all judgment. Now, Mr. Scruby, I am going to proffer a strange request; and I want you to understand I would not beg it for

myself, so soon as I have come into my kingdom. I want you to let me have two hundred and fifty pounds to-morrow—later will not do. It is not to pay a debt, for I have contracted none. One day I may tell you all the story, but not now. Will you get the money for me?"

The lawyer glances keenly a moment into the young, proud face, then says heartily.—
"You shall have it, Dallas!"

"Thank you; you are very good."

And with these words he enters the house of his forefathers. A heavy gloom hangs over it; the servants move softly to and fro, glancing furtively at the new squire.

They remember his expulsion too well, and think it not unlikely that they will be dismissed directly after the funeral.

That night, weary and heartaick, Philippa reaches home. Mrs. Hurst looks up as she enters, and says in a casual way,—

"Mr. Muir has gone, Philippa."

"Gone!" her dark eyes dilating—and do all that she may her face will betray her agitation. "Gone, mother! Is not that rather sudden?"

"Oh!" tartly, "he is coming back in a few days. You need not look so frightened. And while I am speaking of him let me say I consider the interest you display in that young man is really unladylike and foolish."

Philippa does not bear her; all her heart is writhing under the thought: "He could not help me and he is gone, because he would not be witness to my misery. It is all over for me now, all—all over."

"Why don't you speak?" demands her mother. "You are not generally chary of words?"

With a great effort Philippa "pulls herself together."

"I hardly heard you, mother. I was wondering what business could be so important as to call Mr. Muir away so suddenly. Ah, there is Robin's bell. He has heard me, and wants me."

And, turning away, she goes heavily, despairingly, upstairs.

The brightness of Robin's face surprises her as she enters.

"How happy you look, dear boy!" she says, forgetting her grief for his sake.

"That is because I feel myself of some importance. Of course you know, Phil, Mr. Muir is gone? But before he went he came to see me, and gave me a note for you, saying he would rather entrust it to me than anyone else. Naughty Phil! How many more lovers will you have?"

"Don't, dear! I cannot bear badinage to-night. Where is the note? Give it me—quick, Robin."

"How impatient you are?" laughing; "but here it is. Oh, Phil, what a colour you've got!"

She almost snatches it from him, and, moving to a little distance, reads,—

"MY DEAREST PHILIPPA,—I am called away from you when most you need my presence, but you must not think that I am leaving you alone to fight your dreadful battle. Though far from you I shall be better able to help you than by staying here, and you may trust me to return to you at my earliest leisure. Under no circumstances are you to sacrifice yourself as you propose doing. At the very last hour that help you so desire will be yours. I would I could give it to you now. Expect to hear from me by the first post on Saturday. I shall address the letter to your business place to insure safe delivery. In the meanwhile rest happy and content. Good-bye, dear Philippa!"

"D. M."

Just a moment she stands gazing with wide and open eyes at the soul-cheering words. Then going to Robin she sinks down beside him, sobbing out,—

"Oh, my dear, he will save me! He has promised, and he will not fail. Robin, Robin,

we shall be happy together yet—and without Gordon!"

But on the Saturday morning she is very quiet when she arrives at the shop—sick with fear and anxiety.

What if, at the last moment, Dallas shall fail her, shall be wholly unable to give her the promised help?

Half-an-hour later the first post comes in, and Mr. Denman, senior, himself conveys a letter to her—from Dallas, of course.

As she opens it some crisp folds of paper rustle out, and stooping to gather them together she sees they are three bank-notes amounting to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds. She cannot repress a cry as she clasps them close; and a girl close by says,—

"I hope, Phil, you have no bad news?"

"Oh, no! no! the best of news. I never was so happy in my life!" and then, half-smiling, half-crying, she reads the precious words which accompany the generous gift. They are very informal:

"You see I have kept my word, Philippa, and you are free. Do not ask me how. I will tell you all when we meet again. Until then you will trust me, dear, in and through all. I shall have much to tell you, (when I come), that will astonish you. And in the meanwhile believe the business which called me away so unexpectedly, although tragic, has been the means of saving you from a hideous sacrifice, and of restoring (I hope) Robin's health."

"I enclose notes to the value of two hundred and fifty pounds, which you are to use without scruple. Two hundred, of course, you will refund to Pamplin, so setting your father free; the odd fifty you will please apply to your own use. If you care to please me remember it is my wish you should all move to Bourne-mouth, where I will presently join you. Write me of your plans, giving me your new address, and remain there until I come."

"You must not consider the money as a gift, but a loan. I shall shortly tell you how you may repay me, so do not consider yourself indebted to me. The whole affair is purely a business one. Only, Phil, you must give Gordon Chase his *congé* at once. I won't have him philandering after you, (I don't mean that as a pun), and I have no doubt you can easily square Denman. You must not stay with him another day. And now, dear, good-bye. Get all your roses back by the time we meet."

"DALLAS."

"Father in Heaven I thank thee!" is the prayer Phil unconsciously says aloud. "I feel this news is almost too good to be true. I am afraid that I shall wake and find it all a dream."

But no, it is no dream. There, in the hollow of her hand, lie the fresh, crisp notes, and there is his own most precious letter.

She must not stand dreaming, she has so much to do, so she seeks Mr. Denman in his office. He looks up surprised as she enters, and asks what it is she wants.

"My brother's health makes it necessary for us to remove him from Merton," she says quietly; "and as we cannot be parted I have come to ask for my discharge. We are very sick, and before the season begins you will be able to fill the vacancy. I should like to go at once, if you please."

Mr. Denman muses for a moment, then he says with an assumption of benevolence,—

"I shall be sorry to lose you, Miss Hurst; but, of course, under the circumstances, I cannot refuse to let you go. But—er—you see it will put me to some inconvenience, so that I think I am quite justified in asking you to sacrifice a fortnight's salary."

"Certainly," Phil says promptly, "and I may consider myself at liberty at once."

A few minutes later she has bidden her friends good-bye, and is hurrying towards Mr. Pamplin's. That gentleman looks not a little surprised when she is ushered into his presence, and says, bluffly,—

"Now, look here, Miss Hurst, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but if you've come to ask for mercy for your scamp of a father you'll be disappointed. If I can help you in any other way I will, because I know you to be a good, industrious girl!"

"Thank you," she says, flashing hotly, "but you are mistaken in my errand. Mr. Pamplin, I have come to discharge the debt so long owing you, or, rather, to make restitution," and with that she produces two notes.

The brewer looks at her a moment in astonishment, doubtless wondering where she obtained so large a sum of money. Then he says—

"I will not refuse to take it because it is my due; but, my dear young lady, if you should need any assistance—"

"Thank you," Phil answers gratefully. "You are very good, but I am in no present need of help," and the next moment she is hurrying home to carry the good news there.

CHAPTER VII.

THE Hursts are at first incredulous, but the sight of Philippa's remaining note at last convinces them of their truth. And now that her husband's safety is assured Mrs. Hurst has time to think of her motherhood, and falls on the girl's neck, laughing and crying for very joy.

Robin only holds her hand and looks lovingly up at the sister who, for his sake, would have given up all she prized, and whispers,

"You won't have to marry Gordon now, dear!"

Mr. Hurst starts.

"He must be told," he says. "We owe him so much consideration."

"It will be time enough for him to know when we are gone. I will write to him."

"You don't understand, my dear. There is a little matter between us," stammers Hurst.

"You mean you owe him money that you have secretly borrowed of him?" Philippa demands coldly. "I might have known you were not to be trusted. How much is it?"

"A matter of three pounds—a mere trifle."

"Go and pay it, and make all possible haste. I have much to arrange before we go. Stay. You understand, father, you are not to appropriate even a portion of the remainder to your own use. I have it in trust for Robin."

He waits to hear no more, but, rejoicing in his new-found liberty, makes his way to Gordon's residence. People turn to stare after him, whispering that "that fellow Hurst is back!" And for the few who vouchsafe him any greeting he has a jaunty nod and a careless word.

Meanwhile Philippa busies herself with her packing. She and Robin, (this energetic young woman decides), are to travel to Bournemouth this very day, and secure temporary lodgings. Then she will look about for a small house capable of holding the family, and, obtaining one, will write them to join her.

Many times she leaves her work, and running to Robin kisses him fondly, talking so gaily that the boy's spirits are lightened, and the weary little face grows cheerful.

But at last the trunk which contains their modest wardrobe is looked and strapped; and Philippa, in that veritable black velvet, a bright flash on her sweet face, stands looking thoughtfully into the fire. Presently she says—

"Robin, don't think me vain; but once or twice lately I have fancied, perhaps, Mr. Muir sent me this beautiful dress!"

A gleam of memory comes into the boy's eyes.

"You bet he did; what a stupid lout I was not to guess before. Why, we went out that night together, and I'd been telling him how disappointed you were about your frock! And don't you remember he sent me home first?"

"Oh!" says the girl, in a low voice. "If I live to be quite, quite old, and spend every

day of a long life in his service, I never can repay him for all his goodness!"

"Philippa!" entreats a voice behind her, "Philippa," and, turning, she confronts Gordon. "Is it true you are going from me? Sweetheart, tell me it is all a lie! To-day I was to have called you mine. You will not have the heart to throw me over at the last hour—I, who love you so! whose whole life is yours?"

"Hush!" she says, with dignity. "I will not hear you; and you are charging me with a crime of which I am not guilty. You never were my accepted lover, consequently you have no cause to complain that I have thrown you over."

"But you gave me reason to hope you would eventually marry me?"

"No, that is, only under compulsion. And now all necessity for such a step is over, and there remains nothing for us to do but say good-bye, and go our separate ways."

"I cannot let you go," he cries, in a frenzy of passion and pain. "I love you! I love you! Oh Heaven! how I love you! Philippa, listen to me! You must, you shall!" and all in a moment he falls on his knees before her; and, grovelling there, cries brokenly, "My queen, my queen! how shall I live without you? Have pity on me for my love's sake. Let me hope a little one day you will come to me of your own will. Do not rob me of all joy, or lay waste all the years of my life!" and the tears are streaming down the poor wretch's face.

Disgusted as Philippa is by his weakness and loud complainings, she yet cannot help pitying him, and her voice is very gentle as she says—

"Gordon, this is unmanly and unworthy of you, and pains me inexpressibly. Pray rise. And, oh! believe me, the time will come when you will wonder over your own infatuation, and marvel that you found me fair. I will be honest with you; and I tell you now, for the last time, that I never could care for you as you wish—that, did no other man exist, I would not marry you, because I have neither love nor esteem for you."

"You are brutally frank," he says hoarsely. "But, in spite of all you say, I believe I could have won you but for that fellow Muir. You love him!"

Her face flushes deeply, and she makes a gesture of indignant protest; but the next moment says, in a very low voice,—

"You have guessed the truth."

Gordon rises.

"I hope you will get all the happiness you deserve. I hope that you will live to regret your choice, night and day. I wish I had never seen you, or believed, for a moment, that a child of Edwin Hurst's could be anything but false and evil!"

"Shut up!" Robin cries, fiercely, "or by jingo, I'll make you! Philippa, why don't you give him as good as he sends?"

"My dear, have you never heard that 'when fools speak wise folks hold their tongues?' Mr. Chase is well aware what opinion I have of him!"

"You have a very bitter humour, and just now are lifted up with your triumph. But my day will come at last, and then you will regret your conduct of this hour!"

"To save argument, we will suppose all that! Now, if you please, you will leave us?"

"Oh, I am going. You offer a fellow no inducement to stay—curse you!" and frowning upon her melodramatically to the last, he goes out, and so passes utterly and for ever from her life.

Philippa has rented a tiny, comfortably-furnished house; and although she has been scarcely a fortnight at Bournemouth is quite naturalised.

And Robin—oh, poor Robin! Just for a day or two he seems to recover strength wonderfully; but when the first flush of excitement has died away he grows rapidly weaker, until even Philippa has to acknowledge to herself

that there is no hope, and he can't be not far off.

She watches him with a mother's love, tends to all his wants, will not leave him for an hour, and at night takes her rest lying upon a couch in his room.

She has written to Dallas, and has received a reply from him saying, "that as soon as his business is completed he will be with her, that it is impossible for him to get away yet," and writing such comforting words that the tears rise to her eyes, and her lips breathe a blessing on his name.

The end of Robin's young life is nearer even than they had believed. One night, after lying silent for very long, he turns his delicate face upon her, and says in a weak voice,—

"Philippa, darling, I shall not, trouble you much longer now!"

Her own fear seems more terrible, spoken as it is now by him; and in an agony of tears she falls on her knees beside him, and laying her wet cheek to his, sobs,—

"Oh, Robin! Robin! It breaks my heart to hear you. Oh, stay with me, dear! I cannot spare you, little brother!"

"I should like to stay," the boy says, dreamily. "There are so many things I had planned to do when I grew up; but I know now that will never be. Only I did so want to show you how much I loved you, how grateful I am to you for your goodness to me. Phil, dear, you have never given me an angry word. It would have been harder to leave you but for Dallas! He will take care of you, dear! Oh, Phil! Phil! It is hard to die so young," and only her heavy sobs answer him.

He struggles a little while with his emotion, then goes on quite calmly,—

"At first I felt wickedly about it, and all my pain; but lately I have been praying, 'Thy will be done,' and that has helped me. After all, perhaps, it is better I should go now before I have ever hurt you, sister; and I might never have been strong, but always a burden on you—"

"Oh! never a burden, dear, never a burden; but always my best loved, the dearest to my heart of you all. It would have been my happiness to work for you."

"Yes, I know; but I should have been miserable being such a drag upon you. There, I will say no more now; so dry your tears, Phil, and tell me some of your wonderful stories," and with quivering lips she obeys him.

All the next day he lies very quiet, with closed eyes, and towards evening he grows so rapidly worse that Philippa sends for the doctor. He shakes his head, and Robin, seeing the action, says,—

"You mean I am dying?"

"My poor boy, yes!"

"Do not—pity me—but, Phil, she will—miss me—so badly. How long, doctor?"

"You may live through the night!"

"Thank you. I would like to wish all the others good-bye now, Phil. I want my last word and look—to be yours."

They kiss him fondly, and hang over him weeping; then sitting down by him wait in silence for the end. Just as the dawn is breaking he sighs a little, and turning his dying eyes on Philippa, says,—

"Kiss me—now!"

"Oh, my darling! oh, my darling!"

"You will not forget me?"

These are his last words. With a smile and a sigh the young pure spirit has flown; and laying the small thin body back amongst the pillows Philippa breaks into wild weeping.

Once again it is St. Valentine's; and Philippa, pale as the first snowdrop, sits listlessly in her favourite room, looking out with sad eyes upon the ever-changeable sea. Just three days ago they laid little Robin to rest, and life seems very dark to her now.

"Oh, Robin, Robin!" she sighs, "come back to me, my darling! My heart is so empty, so cold! No one will love me as you loved me, my dear, my dear!"

Then a voice close by says,—"Phillipa," and all her body's blood rushes to her heart, for she knows the voice so well, so well! And rising faint and sick with sudden happiness, she sees through a mist of passionate tears the man she has so well loved, will so fondly love until the end!

"Dallas!" she breathes, and goes a little nearer, "you have come back at last?"

"My darling, yes; and, please Heaven, I will never leave you. I would have been with you long ago but there was much to be done, and I could not, even for your dear sake, neglect what was so obviously my duty."

"I knew you would be with us soon," Phillipa says, flushing hotly; "but it seemed long to wait, and my new trouble made me unreasonable."

"Do you mean, Phil, you wanted me?" he questions, eagerly, "that you missed me ever so little?"

"I missed you," simply. "And Robin, our dear Robin, spoke of you so often."

"I wish I could have seen him. He was very dear to me."

"Mr. Muir," she begins, gravely, being now more composed, "you must tell me how I can repay you for your goodness, your generosity!"

"Did not you guess, little Phil? Well, then, I will tell you. I want you to give yourself to me, to love me first and best of any. Do you think you can learn this lesson?"

"I have learned it already," she answers, hiding her face on his breast. "I had learned it long before I guessed it. Oh, Dallas, teach me to be worthy of you!"

"Now," says Dallas, when they are calmer, "let me tell you all. My mother was Squire Walthrop's only daughter, and she married without his permission. My father was only a penniless ensign, and the squire cast his daughter off; but when she was left a widow his heart relented, and he took her back into his home and affection. She did not live long, and, dying, left me to her father's care. He never loved me, but he did his duty by me, and when I was old enough sent me to Oxford with a view to making a clergyman of me, (there was a fine living in his gift); but I refused to follow such a vocation, feeling myself unsuited for it, and in consequence of this he cast me off. But by his and uncle Bart's death I have come into possession of the whole estate; but I will explain more fully later on. Darling, are you satisfied with your Valentine?"

"Satisfied! Oh, Dallas, and you can think of me still? Me, so much beneath you, so terribly your inferior in everything?"

But he stops her words with kisses, and when her agitation is a little subsided says,—

"And when shall we be married, sweetheart?"

"Let it be when you will. I shall be content!"

Two years have flown since that eventful day, and Mr. Hurst, as Dallas Muir's steward, is doing well. But Dallas is wise in forbidding him to reside at Chittington; wiser still in keeping strict watch and ward over him, so that indolence and dishonesty are alike impossible. Mrs. Hurst looks almost young and pretty; and the twins, thanks to Dallas, enjoy greater advantages than ever Robin or Phillipa did.

And Phil?

"Oh!" she says, two years later, (on the favourite day of lovers), "I am the happiest woman on earth! There is no one like you, Dallas, no one! I wish that Robin could know how happy we are!"

"Perhaps he does, my darling, and rejoices with us! Heaven bless you, my wife! You are the sweetest Valentine ever man had!"

[THE END.]

FACTIÆ.

THE OLD, OLD STORY BOLLED DOWN.—She, (early in the evening): "Good-evening, Mr. Sampson." Same Shp, (late in the evening): "Good-night, George."

"Why didn't you marry young Squib? He has good looks, wealth, and everything desirable!" "He never asked me."

"So far as you saw," said a counsel to a witness, "she was doing her ordinary household duty?" "I should say so—she was talking," was the ironical reply.

"Do you think I'm a fool, sir?" thundered a fiery Scotch laird to his new footman. "Well, sir," replied the canny Scot, "I'm no lang here, and I dinna ken yet."

THERE is no abstract excellence in early rising; all depends on what you do when you are out of bed. It would be better for the world if some people never got up.

Mrs. H., mistaking a mirror for a door and suddenly starting back. Mr. H. (laughing): "Why don't you go through, my dear?" Mrs. H.: "Upon reflection I thought I would better not."

LADY (to cook): "What will we have for dinner, Bridget?" Bridget: "I can't tell, mum, until I have consulted wid de perlace-man on this baste. He has not been around yit this mornin'."

SWEET SEVENTEEN.—Man at telephone (trying to find out who has rung the call): "Hello, there; are you thirty-seven?" Young lady at the other end (indignantly): "No, you horrid thing, I'm only seventeen!"

SCENE: Anatomy Class: Professor (showing skeleton of bird's leg): "What is this a skeleton of?" Student: "A bird's leg." Professor (sharply): "Fore or hind leg?" Student (confused): "Eh—ah—aw—hind leg."

WOMEN require more sleep, it is said, than men. Blifkins disputes this, as, he says, the last sound he hears of nights is the voice of Mrs. B. in her nocturnal lecture, and the first in the morning, in the matutinal admonition.

SOCIAL INSINGERINGITIES.—His lordship (vociferously, with the rest, after a lady has sung): "Bravo! Encore! Beautiful! Go on! I could listen all night!" (Aside, to footman): "Just see if my carriage is come. Look sharp!"

Mrs. PUDDICOMBE: "Isn't that Mr. Doliver near the chairman?" Puddicombe: "Yes, my dear." "How utterly miserable he looks! Has he been ill?" "Oh, no; he's all right. The poor fellow is booked for a funny speech to-night!"

"MABEL!" said the young man, in deep, desperate tones, "I love you!" "Yes?" "Tell me, do you think that you could ever love me?" "I don't know. If you'd send Charley Simkins round to give me lessons, I might try."

MISTRESS (wishing to see if her message had been correctly delivered): "What did you tell the ladies, Bridget?" Bridget: "I told 'em yez wasn't feelin' well, and yez was goin' to call on 'em soon, and they sez they was sorry to hear it."

"EVELYN," he said dreamily, "I love you—love you—love you—" "You've told me that about a dozen times," interrupted Evelyn. "If you've nothing else to say we may as well part at once. I'm no dawdler." They were engaged on the spot.

"DRUNK again, you old brute!" snapped Mrs. Snaggles, as her liege lord fell into bed at 2 A.M. "Not a bit of it, m'dear," gurgled Snaggles. "Got a cold, m'dear; thash all." "Cold! How on earth could a cold put you in this horrid condition?" "Went into a plashe, m'dear, where they had beer on draught, an' I got in 'er draught several times, m'dear."

"Now, tell me truly, professor, what do you think of my voice?" asked little Miss Mac-soreocher, after giving the professor a specimen of her vocalisation. "Oh! my dear Miss Macsoreocher," replied the polite professor, "I couldn't be so rude as that!"

THE Irishman had a correct appreciation of the business, who, being asked by the judge, when he applied for a license to sell whisky, if he was of a good moral character, replied: "Faith, yer honour, I don't see the necessity of a good moral character to sell whisky."

TEACHER (to class in arithmetic): "John goes marketing. He buys two and a quarter pounds of sugar at five pence a pound, two dozen eggs at eight pence a dozen, and a gallon of milk at ten pence a gallon. What does it all make?" Smallest boy (hugging himself ecstatically): "Oustard."

PARISH PRIEST: "And now, Maurice, after all I've said, I hope you'll take the pledge and join the society." Maurice (sheepishly): "It's hard to deny you, father, but I'm with your reverence, and as I can't come in myself, begorra, I'll find a substitute, and nobody can say any fairer than that."

ROMANTIC SPIRITISM: "Excuse me, sir, but is not this the spot where the beautiful girl fell into the water last summer, and was so gallantly rescued by the gentleman who afterwards married her?" Practical Bachelor (giving her a penetrating glance): "Yes, ma'am! but I can't swim."

THE orthography of our great grandmothers was uncertain, says *Notes and Queries*. The old Duchess of Gordon used to say to her cronies: "You know, my dear, when I don't know how to spell a word I always draw a line under it; and if it is spelled wrong it passes for a very good joke, and if it is spelled right it don't matter."

"WELL, Pat, what's the matter?" "Matter enough, doother, an' all about that plaster ye bed me put on my back—oi do be forgettin' the name of id, sor." "Porous plaster, wasn't it?" "Ye may well call id that, doother, for it was the poorest plaster meself iver hearn tell on." "What was the matter with it, I'd like to know?" "Dade an' id was an owid one, sor, for as certain as oi'm telling ye, it was full of holes, so it was."

"HELLO, Shorty," said a gamin, looking at a man of about five feet two in front of the *Globe* building yesterday. "Don't call me Shorty, you little cuss!" answered the man of low stature; "If you do I'll warm your jacket." "Ain't yer name Shorty?" replied the kid. "No, it ain't Shorty," said the man. "Den don't answer an' get mad when somebody yells Shorty if yer name ain't Shorty. If yer not the man I was talkin' ter what's the matter wid yer?"

BLACK (an expert stenographer): "Say, Green, the boy from the Journal office is here after the transcript of that temperance lecture. Is it most finished?" Green (a novice): "All but a short sentence in about the middle of it, and I'll be hanged if I can make out from my notes what it is." Black: "Just insert 'great applause' and let it go." Green acts upon this suggestion, and the lecture is sent to the Journal office for publication with the doctored part reading: "Friends, I will detain you but a few moments longer." (Great applause.)

PROFESSOR (in a New York medical college exhibiting a patient to his class): "Gentlemen, allow me to call your attention to this unfortunate man. It is impossible for you to guess what is the matter with him. Examine the shape of his head and the expression of his eyes, and you are none the wiser for it, but that is not strange. It takes years of experience and constant study to tell at a glance, as I can, that he is deaf and dumb." Patient (looking up with a grin): "Professor, I am very sorry, but my brother, who is deaf and dumb, couldn't come to-day, so I came in his place."

SOCIETY.

A lady, who is somewhat given to armorial bearings on her belongings, has had her family crest painted on her bonnet strings.

There is a fancy this season for fragrant fans, mounted on violet or sandal-wood, and made of the most delicate silk gauzes and crapes.

It is intended to present the Prince of Wales with a perfect model of the Forth Bridge, in silver, upon the occasion of His Royal Highness's visit to the Modern Athens in March.

SOCIETY has added another and an increasingly popular amusement to the joys of the present season. Winter marriages are becoming more and more the fashion.

It may be well to warn foolish virgins against one very pretty but dangerous specimen of toque—that which has an opening in the top to allow the high-dressed hair to come through: an excellent device to invite the influenza.

There is no country in Europe in which girls have such freedom of choice as they have in England, or where the old-fashioned marriage for love is so common.

During the last three weeks the Emperor of Russia has been in a state of insane panic, the result being that he has sunk into the deepest despondency, and constantly insists that his end is approaching. The Emperor is not likely to rally from this miserable condition while he continues to soothe his nerves with injections of morphia.

The Princess of Wales will probably proceed to St. Petersburg shortly after the Prince's departure for Cannes, in order that she may be with her sister, the Empress of Russia, at the time of her Majesty's accouchement, which is expected next month.

A party novelty which is now to be seen in every fashionable New York drawing room is sure to find its way across the Atlantic. It is a copper kettle swinging on an iron crane above a bell-bodied spirit lamp. Until the last guest has departed the pretty tea-kettle sings merrily, giving an air of cheerfulness to the scene, and greatly facilitating the tea-making duties of the hostess.

It is a fact but little known, save to his most intimate friends, that the Prince of Wales always wears about his person a little sachet containing among other substances frankincense, as a preservative against low fever and ague. This was recommended to His Royal Highness by the late Duchess of Baden (the mother of the Duke of Hamilton) years ago, and the Prince has worn the little bag on his chest and next to his undershirt ever since. The efficacy of this charm is believed in in Germany, and indeed medical men by no means ridicule it.

Men have few opportunities of varying the monotony of their costume, but of those few they almost invariably avail themselves. Striped shirts in alternative white and colour are worn with plain white linen collars. The stripes go across the front, are rather broad, while pink and pale blue are the favourite tints. The waistcoat is cut away, sufficiently to show the shirt front, and the tie is of a darker hue. Frock coats are still thrown open.

One of the best ways of freshening the complexion is to expose it freely to the rain. A long walk, with the soft rain playing in one's face is a thorough beautifier, which umbrellas have robbed us of long enough. Equipped in waterproof cloak and cap of storm serge, leaving the face quite bare, one should walk hours at least to get the full benefit of the rain. Not only the rain, but the vapour-laden air soaks the tissues, washing the skin more thoroughly than a Turkish bath, filling out the shrunken skin, parched by house heat, and obliterating fine wrinkles.

STATISTICS.

EMIGRATION returns show that last year 348,661 persons left the United Kingdom, being 55,000 less than in 1885.

In 1888 this country imported 17,651,592 pairs of gloves. Their declared value was £1,598,749, being 1s. 9½d. per pair.

In Cashmere, thirty thousand shawls are made yearly. It takes three men a year to weave a pair. It takes ten goats to furnish the material for one and a half yards square.

The total number of entries by ticket at the World's Fair in Paris, between May 6 and November 6, is stated to have been 23,149,853. This number is not given as official, but is thought to be very nearly correct.

In the military service there are altogether about one hundred and forty-six infantry bands, of which three belong to the Foot Guards, one each to the Artillery and Engineers, and the remainder to the infantry of the line. The cavalry, including the household regiments and Royal Horse Artillery number thirty-two. These figures do not include the Militia, Volunteers, and Royal Marines. Taking all the bands together, it is reckoned that there are over six thousand musicians in the military service of the crown.

GEMS.

THE emptiness of all things, from politics to pastimes, are never so striking to us as when we fall in them.

No state can be more destitute than that of a person who, when the delights of sense forsake him, has no pleasure of the mind.

EVERYTHING yields before the strong and earnest will. It grows by exercise. It excites confidence in others, while it takes to itself the lead. Difficulties before which mere cleverness fails, and which leave the irresolute prostrate and helpless, vanish before it. They not only do not impede its progress, but it often makes of them stepping-stones to a higher and more enduring triumph.

One who is leaning and tottering cannot assist another to rise. He must stand firmly on his own feet if he would put forth a strong hand to lift up his falling brother. So, if we would confer the blessing of independence upon others, we must attain it for ourselves, for we shape their lives and characters not so much by what we say and do as by what we are. "Man is his own star, and the soul that can render an honest and a perfect man commands all light, all influence, all fate."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

If one wishes to cool a hot dish in a hurry, it will be found that if the dish be placed in a vessel full of cold, salty water it will cool far more rapidly than if it stood in water free from salt.

CHICKEN PATTIES.—Chop cold roast or boiled chicken very fine, moisten well with boiled milk thickened with a little cornstarch and seasoned with butter, salt and pepper. Distribute in heaping tablespoonfuls in small gem-pans lined with puff paste which have previously been baked eight minutes in a quick oven. Set in the oven again, and brown for two or three minutes.

MARMALADE CAKE.—1½ tea cup flour, 1½ tea cup sugar, ¾ tea cup milk, ¾ teaspoon baking soda, ½ teaspoon cream of tartar, 2 teaspoons marmalade, 1 egg. Mix all the dry things together, stir in the marmalade, the milk, and the egg beaten up. Grease a soup plate, put in the mixture, flatten the top and brush over with a little milk, and sprinkle sugar over, and put in the oven till ready.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THE greatest snuff-taking country in the world is France, though it shows a decline in the habit.

"TYPOSCREE" is suggested as the best word to be applied to the person who manipulates a writing machine.

THE longest frosts in this country are, as a general rule, those which begin between Christmas and New Year's Day, and the deepest falls of snow during the last twenty years have commenced in the middle of January.

A RIVAL of Connecticut's renowned wooden nutmegs is manufactured in Germany. It is artificial coffee, which is made from linseed meal, roasted to a dark colour and mixed with some glutinous substance. Machinery gives it the shape of the real coffee bean.

AMONG the Vosges peasants, children born at a new moon are supposed to have their tongues better hung than others, while those born at the last quarter are supposed to have less tongue, but better reasoning powers. A daughter born during the waxing moon is always precocious.

SCIENTISTS claim there can be no life on the moon. The day on the moon would last for a fortnight, and then there would be black night for another fortnight. Scorching by day and frozen by night, the absence of water, and almost total lack of air, would prevent the moon being an abode for human beings.

THE Exhibition craze has extended to Jamaica. It has been arranged to hold at Kingston, Jamaica, in the year 1891 an Exhibition of island products, manufactures, and works of art, together with exhibits of works of art, machinery, and industrial and agricultural products from Great Britain and other countries and Colonies.

THERE is one thing that I never have been able to account for, says an observer, and that is, why a man will have every draw and pigeon-hole in his desk crowded, no matter how large the desk may be. You will find a man getting along nicely with a desk or table with one drawer. Then he has a desk with any number of drawers and pigeon-holes, which are quickly filled. The puzzling part of it is, why he persists in filling the desk simply because there is room.

A PECULIARITY about the blind is that there is seldom one of them who smokes. Soldiers and sailors accustomed to smoking, and who have lost their sight in action, continue to smoke for a short while, but soon give up the habit. They say that it gives them no pleasure when they cannot see the smoke, and some have said that they cannot taste the smoke unless they see it. This almost demonstrates the theory that if you blindfold a man in a room full of smoke, and put a lighted and an unlighted cigar in his mouth alternately, he will not be able to tell the difference.

It has latterly been statistically vouched for that English boys and girls are, in comparison with foreign boys and girls, remarkably deficient in the art of swimming. We think that the great mistake made is teaching the beginner the same stroke as that used by the proficient swimmer, namely, placing the palms of the hands together in front of the chest, thrusting them out and bringing them round and back by a segment of a circle. The learner should simply push the water down in front of him with the palms of his hands, the hands would never then be out of the water, and in that case no one can sink. A dog swims the first time it is thrown into the water because it cannot elevate its paws out of the water, and by its efforts to get out of water it paddles. This natural action of paddling should be taught to the human being who is learning to swim; when he gains confidence by knowing he will not sink, he will soon learn the better style of swimming. The former will be mastered in three lessons.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BOB.—"Effel" is pronounced as if spelt "Efel."

PARTY.—Any recruiting sergeant will give you the information.

CHARLIE BOY.—You had better get the advice of a lawyer on the subject.

A READER OF OUR PAPER.—Shrove Tuesday fell on the 29th of February in the year 1894.

SOMEWHAT MOTHER.—Prisoners awaiting trial are not compelled to wear prison clothes.

BARTON.—A person leading a horse along the roadway must keep on the left side of the road.

R. H. CARVE ROBERTS.—The words are translated, "All hope abandon, ye who enter here."

T. T.—It is the chief town of Madagascar, and is of considerable size, having some 90,000 inhabitants.

JENNIE.—A piece of horseradish put into a jar of pickles will keep the vinegar from losing its strength.

TENANT.—The landlord cannot compel a furniture remover to state to where he has removed the furniture of a tenant.

WHIPPED.—If you know what regiment your relative belongs to, you can obtain information by writing to headquarters.

H. S.—The climate of Buenos Ayres is humid and variable; frost seldom occurs, and the mean summer heat is ninety.

AMICUS.—Furniture on the hire system cannot be taken by creditors unless they are prepared to pay out the firm from whom it is hired.

AMUSE.—You can cure your nervousness by an effort of will; unless it arises from physical causes, it can be overcome like any other bad habit.

KATE.—Knitted or woven stockings were introduced into England in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. Previous to her day hose were made of cloth.

D. STURGEON.—"Goldah," one of the big trees of California, is a solid tree 39 feet in diameter at the base, and estimated to weigh 100,000 tons.

GRIMBLE.—The name of the town of Derby is pronounced as it is spelt; the name of the race and family are usually pronounced as if spelt "Derby."

SISTER ALICE.—There are "sisterhoods," or religious communities of women, in the Anglican Church; and also in the Lutheran, in Prussia and elsewhere.

JAMES BRETT.—The fact that a man married under an assumed name would not make the marriage void or voidable, unless the wife was a party to the fraud.

ANNETTE.—An old woman of eighty would not only be entitled to parish relief if her husband could not or would not maintain her. The guardians would put the husband into court.

SERGEANT.—You had better apply for the information at the Agency General for the Dominion of Canada. The office is at 9, Victoria Chambers, S.W. You will get all particulars there.

BETA.—The alb is a vestment worn by the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church. It is a long robe of white linen, bound round the waist by a cincture, and fitting closer than a surplice.

INQUISITIVE.—After the riots in Bristol relating to the Reform Act four persons were sentenced to death and executed, and twenty-two were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

AN OLD READER.—Backgammon is played with dice, but is not of necessity a gambling game. It is of great antiquity, and its name comes from two Welsh words signifying respectively back and battle.

MIRABEL.—The figures of spears on graves denote men; and spindles, women. Alfred the Great, in his will, calls his male co-venturers those of the spear-side, and the female those of the spindle-side.

MABELLE.—Love potions in the olden times consisted partly of ingredients which are known to physicians as stimulants, partly of poisons of animals which had died for want of food or air, and other abominations.

X.—A wife may, on the ground of adultery by her husband, obtain a decree of judicial separation, (which does not authorise another marriage); but to obtain a divorce she must also prove cruelty or desertion.

H. H.—A title lady, whether she holds the title in her own right or by marriage, does not, either by the death of her husband from whom she derives the title or by marriage with a commoner, forfeit her right to such title.

BALLY.—It is hardly worth while to try to dye your straw hat for yourself; it costs very little to have it properly done by a dyer, and the loss you would make would probably only result in a failure if you attempted it yourself.

FAIRY.—Advise your friends who are short of stature not to have their skirts trimmed with rows of velvet running round them. These make one look shorter still, whereas stripes running lengthwise add to the appearance of height.

L. P. D.—Chinese laws prohibit the printing of the lives and doings of living persons. As regards royalty, this rule is most severely enforced. The acts of the emperors, and of their families, must not be printed during the entire reign of the dynasty.

J. K.—A writ of summons would have to be served, and then, if the debtor did not enter appearance or give notice of defence at the end of the prescribed period, judgment could be signed, and execution levied against his goods without further notice to him.

F. M.—Properly in its origin the word was a distinction of the possessor of a landed estate, to whom belonged the right to bear arms; but it was a scudic paper that appraised the monetary value of the suffix by stating that in their notice of arrival the title "Esquire" was "three pence extra."

DICK BOLE.—The Inland Revenue authorities have the power to make their own assessment of the annual value of properties liable to assessed taxes. Notice is given to the owner or occupier by the service of the claim, against which he may appeal, or may apply for the return of taxes over-charged and paid.

DAN.—A man dies when he has lost a fifth of his blood. The heart with each contraction ejects six ounces of blood from each ventricle, at a pressure in the left ventricle of one-fourth of an atmosphere. The heart sends all the blood around the body twice every minute, or in about thirty-five contractions.

VERA.—There certainly was such an animal as what is now called the mammoth, but no one has ever seen one entire. Portions of the bones and tusks are found in northern Russia and in Siberia. It seems to have been an enormous kind of elephant, with tremendous curling tusks and a body covered with hair.

POUSEY'S MISTRESS.—It has long been an understood thing that cats are more attached to places than to persons, but we should very much doubt the truth of it. It is well known that cats claim to certain places in the hope of seeing the parties there; but, if the house be left empty, the cat will wander away, and if by chance she meets her old friends, she will stay with them.

THE GRUMBING MAN.

I've often met him, and so have you,
This solemn fellow, with ugly frown,
Who lives in a dark and dingy house
At the north-east corner of Grumbletown.
You cannot please him; no use to try
To win for your efforts a word of praise,
For the foremost man of the grumbling clan
Will grumble and growl to the end of his days.

He sees no beauty in earth or sky,
In works of nature or works of art;
But every where he may chance to be
Is ready to set the cynic's part.
He grumbles at this, and he growls at that,
And joy and laughter are under ban
In every place where he shows his face,
As you might expect of a grumbling man.

His friends are few, as you might suppose;
And none of the merry-making sort
Would venture into his dingy house,
With any intention of having sport.
Ah, no, indeed; and so easy it is
For him to find fault whenever he can,
That I pity the wife, the peace of whose life
Is destroyed by the whims of a grumbling man.

J. P.

AMY M.—Any coloured dress can be worn at a ball, but care should be taken to make all the accessories correspond or contrast properly with the prevailing colour. There is nothing prettier for young girls at a ball than any soft white material, with as little ornament as possible. Fresh young beauty does not need much adorning.

I. QUIRRE.—Otters travel great distances at night, and there is scarcely a stream in the country, if any, which is not visited by them at times; for otters are much more universally distributed than is commonly supposed, and they are familiar with the most various kinds of retreats. Myots, old pollards, mill-wheels, outcrops—there is scarcely a spot which will not harbour them, from a town sewer to the thatched roof of a shed.

ART.—Some arts of former ages have been lost, as that of engraving on crystal stones and granite, practised by the Ethiopians, Egyptians, &c., and the art of painting on glass, practised in the monastic ages. Different directions, too, have been given to the arts, though each is perfect in its way. Chinese art, Japanese art, Hindoo art, are each different from European, which follows the Greek standard in sculpture and the Italian in painting.

IGNORANT.—The pillory and the stocks were distinct modes of punishment, though of the same class. When a man sat in the stocks he did sit, and only his feet were held. In the pillory he stood, and his head and hands were passed through holes. He was fastened in such a manner that it was impossible for him to move, and frequently his ears were nailed to the wood, and his nose slit. Up till the year 1815 the pillory was in common use in England, and it was not finally abolished till the year 1837.

UNINFORMED.—The words "lord" and "lady," according to some authorities, had a Saxon origin that in these days might not be considered as very aristocratic. Lord is derived from "La-ford," laf-giver. The "La-ford" was so called from his maintaining at his own expense a number of retainers or dependents. Lady is derived from "La-fdan," laf-server. The "La-fdan" out and served round the bread to the guests, a duty which is now-a-days performed by a servant among people who pretend to belong to the upper circles. It would seem, therefore, that in the ancient days lords and ladies were rather useful members of society.

MISS CONOLLY.—Your question is a little vague. You do not say how you wish to be married, whether by banns, license, or in a registrar's office. If you will let us know, we shall be very happy to give you the requisite information. We are always glad to reply to any question put to us by our friends. Any one in the body of trade can better answer your last inquiry than we can.

MOLLIE.—The luxuriant appliances of the modern toilet are no doubt costly items in the annual bill of fashion; but in glancing backward through the pages of history, one finds that the wives and the daughters of the first families of former ages were far more extravagant in such matters in all respects than our own dashing dames and demotelles. In the perfumery line, especially, some of the ancient nations were dreadfully lavish.

BENNET.—You are acting very unwisely in encouraging the attentions of your mistress's son, even if, as you say, he is a good young man, and earnest in his attentions to you. A marriage with you would probably be most distasteful to his parents, and would not, in all probability, be as happy for yourself as you fancy. If you have a kind, judicious mistress, tell her all about it. You need hardly fear being sent away in disgrace if you adopt such a course.

CONSTANT READER.—Nature has enabled some animals to see objects behind them as well as in front without turning around. The hare has this power in a marked degree. Its eyes are large, prominent, and placed laterally. Its power of seeing things in the rear is very noticeable in greyhound coursing; for, though this dog is mute while running, the hare is able to judge to a minute the exact moment at which it will be best for it to double.

SOCIETY.—Men who associate habitually with ladies are always superior to those who do not. By associating with ladies men lose their pedantic, rude, declamatory, or sullen manner; and those ladies who are accustomed to, and at once in the society of men, are always superior to their sex in general; they lose their frivolity—all their intellectual faculties are awakened. Therefore it is both right and improving for men and ladies to mix in society.

Q. Q.—The origin of the phrase, "A Roland for an Oliver," is given by Thomas Warburton in these words: "These were two of the most famous in the list of Charlemagne's twelve peers; and their exploits are rendered so ridiculously and equally extravagant by the old romancers, that from thence arose that saying, amongst our plain and sensible ancestors, of giving one a 'Roland for an Oliver,' to signify the matching one incredibly lie with another."

IRKED.—With street costumes no diamonds are allowable except for obviously useful purposes. They may button the collar, fasten the cuff, pin the hat in place, but may not shine from the ears or flash from the corse in any purely ornamental design. For evening dress Sirind the sailor never dreamed of such glory in his valley of diamonds as the stars, pendants, and quaintly fashioned pins which make what seems like a complete corsage of gems on the gown of a fashionable woman.

ARTHUR LAKE.—The best pearls are said to be found off the coast of Ceylon and in the Persian Gulf, and they are obtained by divers, who cut off the oysters, in which they are found, from the rocks to which they grow, and deposit them in a basket or net. They are then conveyed to the shore, where they are exposed to the sun until thoroughly dried. They are then opened, and the pearls secured. They are sometimes found attached to the shell of the oyster, but more frequently in the flesh. How these pearls are formed is mostly a matter of conjecture, but it is thought that some substance like a grain of sand gets into the mouth of the oyster, and that some of the mother-of-pearl collects in it, and thus forms a round pearl. The best pearls are found in the pearl oyster, which grows in beds like the common oyster.

DACRE.—It is the general impression that a "hungry man" does not "weigh any more after eating a hearty meal of victuals than he does before he eats it." As a matter of fact, parties have occasionally had themselves weighed before and immediately after taking a meal, and have found no appreciable difference in the weight indicated by the scales. Two circumstances are, however, to be taken in mind in this connection. The full diet of a healthy person is by no means bulky, and rarely consists of above three pounds of solid food daily, thus giving an average of little more than a pound to each meal. And such a narrow margin as this would be very apt to be overlooked by an unpractised user of common scales. Our inference is, therefore, that a meal probably makes a slight difference in one's normal weight, but a variation so slight in proportion as not to be recognised save by exact tests.

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